

SERMONS

UPON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS,

IN TWO VOLUMES,

BY

THE REV. JOHN PENN, L.L.B.

VICAR OF ROUGHTON, NORFOLK.

VOL I

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SERMONS

1808

VARIOUS SUBJECTS

TWO VOLUMES



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And with his stripes we are healed.*
All

(xvii)

All we like sheep have gone astray: We have turned every one to his own way: And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter: And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth - - - 183

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ERRATA.

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- 5—25, read *finesse* for *fineness*.
- 17—24, read *men* for *then*.
- 92—24, read *faithfulness* for *faith*.
- 114— 7, omit the word *to*.
- 150—11, read a *comma* before *but*.
- 175— 6, read *bitter* for *better*.
- 184—24, read a *comma* before *crucified*.
- 187— 7, read *for* for *from*.
- 192—12, at the end, read a *comma* for a *colon*.
- 197— 7, read *antedeluvian* for *antideluvian*.
- 200— 2, read *him* for *them*.
- 213— 1, read *institutions* for *instructions*.
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- 238—18, read *our own* tormentors.

S E R M O N I.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXII. VERSE 6.

*Train up a Child in the way he should go ; and
when he is old he will not depart from it.*

THE great decay of Christian piety is a reflection not so full of wonder as of melancholy and indignation : Our age wears so uncomfortable a face, that the good man has reason enough to say, " I have no pleasure in it." We have indeed the name of Christians, but the power of Godliness is rarely to be found. We must wink hard not to discover the gracious end for which Christ came into the world, (which was by a new covenant to make us an holy and happy people); but the reciprocal obligations find no way to our hearts. The fall

23.
B

of

of man, no doubt, has left a stain upon us, which is not merely the tincture of a skin, but penetrates and pervades all the faculties of the soul. We bring an original corruption into the world with our frail bodies; but as it is absurd to think that children should be deemed guilty of any actual sins before they arrive to any knowledge of good and evil, and consequently cannot be moved to will the one or abhor the other, so those crying sins, which are most notorious amongst us, are chiefly owing to custom, and the want of an early and religious education.

When the Almighty Creator had surveyed with delight this great and glorious fabrick of the universe, he was pleased to bless every creature he had made, and gave them this gracious command:—"Increase and multiply." Ever since, all the animal part have been moved to propagate its own species, and by instinct are as solicitous to preserve their young as desirous to generate them. So incessant is the care, and so strong the bias of their affection, that they rush their own lives into danger for *their* safety: A remark which rises in judgment
against

against the conduct of those unnatural human beasts, who leave the "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh," to grovel unassisted upon the flinty face of nature, or with a monstrous apathy, scarce put out their unwilling hand to lift them up. Surely parents ought to hearken to reason as much as the brutes do to instinct. Shall Man, the noblest creature of this lower world, whom his Creator has framed in his own image, by vesting him with powers and gifts far superior to other beings, be deficient in this great duty and concern of nature? Shall the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air be ready to hear its voice, and obey its commands; and shall Man be found deaf to all its calls, and hardened against all its endearments? God forbid! The man who can prevail upon himself to break through all the strong and almost indissoluble ties of parental affection, forfeits his claim to the confidence of the world, and deserves to be proscribed by society: Because, what principle, either civil or religious, can bind that man who can cancel the first and most pleading obligation, and opposes the first law even of natural religion. St. Paul

therefore thus decides: "If any provide
 "not for his own, and especially those of
 "his own house, he hath denied the faith,
 "and is worse than an infidel." It may
 seem harsh to think that parents are totally
 destitute of all affection for their children;
 it may be deemed uncharitable to imagine
 them deserving a name which language has
 not yet invented for such a character; yet
 daily experience too visibly teaches us, that
 either their concern is not great, or wofully
 misplaced and irregular. Scarcely sufficient
 is that punishment which they sometimes
 suffer in their retired moments, or the season
 of affliction, but must more severely feel on
 that bed, in which death has fixed its sting.

But lest any should so far divest themselves of human feelings as to be totally insensible to such an obligation, God is himself pleased to second this general voice of nature, and to confirm her secret dictates by a positive command. Moses, the messenger of the most high God; the great lawgiver of Israel; not only tells his people, that they were "to love the Lord their God
 "with all their hearts," &c. &c. "to keep
 "his commands and observe his judgments;
 but,

but, says he, "thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." This command is plain, positive, full, and strict. It does not say, that parents are obliged merely to *declare* to their children their duty, but it enjoins them to teach it *diligently*, not once or twice, but frequently and often; and to omit no opportunity of watering their tender minds with the streams of pious instruction. But how repugnant to this precept is the present mode of education, which teaches them chiefly a mere conformity to this world. Any custom, however it militates against the principles of common sense, or the sounder dictates of Revelation, if baptized by the name of politeness, like a gilded pill is swallowed with avidity. Religion they view either as too vulgar for their refined taste, or too formidable a bugbear to approach, forgetting that it tends to polish human nature more than the fineness of the courtier, the mongrel half-digested tenets of the traveller, or unintelligible etiquette of that creature,

creature, whom language has not yet learned to describe, the *Man of Fashion*. Though man be *born* a religious creature, yet 'tis considered only necessary to *die* one. The question is not, whether he be a *religious*, but a *well-bred* man; as if a man could be so without God in the world; as much religion as they want they may acquire in the evening of their years, they think, without application or loss of time; so that that which is by nature the distinction of man, the comfort of intelligent beings, in every stage of life, and our only support in that great conflict betwixt mortality and the Prince of Terrors, is postponed to those institutions which mere human folly has invented. No wonder then that in this age vice and infidelity make such bold advances; no wonder that men dare even glory in their shame, and openly profess themselves enemies to the faith, by which alone they can be saved. This malady chiefly originates then from the want of a good and religious education; and till a reformation leads in the tender age of youth, we have little reason to expect sincerity to God, or fidelity to man. As man is a com-
pound

pound of body and soul, the enquiry ought to be, which of the two is most valuable? The soul we believe to be immortal; to be part of God himself; and to return to him whose it is. The body, after a few days, we daily see laid down in the grave, to moulder into undistinguished dust. The soul animates and informs the body; but the body without the soul lies inactive like a lump of clay: The soul then is evidently the most estimable. Now in worldly affairs we generally appropriate and apportion our labour and attention to what we most prize: It is not therefore sufficient for parents to introduce children into being, provide for their well-being, and equip them for their pilgrimage through this world; but they are likewise to furnish them with a passport to the heavenly Jerusalem; and this they are to effect in the manner which God, by his blessed Son, has been pleased to prescribe.

All parents then should give their children an *holy and timely Baptism*. Our Saviour has ordained Baptism as an outward means of entering into covenant with God, whereby from a state of wrath and damnation, due to us from original sin and natural corruption,

we are reinstated into his favour. Dipping in, or pouring on of water, (for the Greek word favours both senses) our Saviour, even after his resurrection, and just before his ascension, when he had finished the work he was sent to do, and therefore would not leave it incomplete, is pleased to sanctify to the mystical washing away of sin. The analogy, or rational proportion, runs thus: As outward washing cleanses the body of filth, so the inward and spiritual, which is derived to us by this ordinance, should purge our souls from all corruption of sin. Hereby we are not only "washed, but sanctified," and dedicated to God; are made of the number of his children; and have a federal right to all the blessings of the New Covenant: Hence arises the necessity of Water Baptism. What God has been pleased evidently to appoint, it becomes not man to attempt to abrogate. God can enter into covenant with man upon what stipulations he shall think proper to specify: He can confer his blessings upon what terms he is pleased to fix: As he cannot change, we must bend our practice to his precepts, and not expect that he should consult either our superstition or perverted judgment.

judgment. With what face then can any man or set of men dare to offer up incense upon an altar of their own erection, in opposition to one of our Saviour's own positive establishment. Any plea then of an extraordinary illumination, or supernatural afflatus, cannot supersede the use or necessity of Water Baptism; because, though Cornelius and his friends had received the Holy Ghost, to the greatest degree possible, "even of speaking with tongues;" yet St. Peter concluded it necessary to baptize them with water. And as this period stood after the day of Pentecost, when the promise of "baptizing the Apostles with the Holy Ghost and with fire," was fulfilled, we must conclude with St. John against all heresies of this sort, that "except a man be born of water, (as an initiation) "and of the spirit, (as a furtherance of a Christian life) "he cannot enter "into the kingdom of God."

As the covenant of grace and mercy cannot be too soon entered into, (any more than the remission of sins and the favour of God can be too soon obtained), hence arises the necessity of Infant Baptism. God, as doing what he will with his own, can confer his blessings

blessings upon whom, in what manner, and at what time he pleases. Under the Jewish dispensation he commanded every male child to be circumcised on the eighth day ; an age at which the infant was incapable of being subject to the obligations of the covenant. By the same authority Baptism was instituted in the place of circumcision ; and therefore in a larger and more constructional sense, as ours is a covenant of grace and mercy, we may fairly presume that our infants are equally capable of all the rights and benefits of the Christian covenant, though exempt in that state from the force of its obligations. Besides, a covenant between God and man is not of that reciprocal nature as between man and man. In the latter case there is an equality of parties, and therefore an equal claim : In the former the distance is so great, that it is our duty to obey, from natural more than federal motives ; and so little claim have we upon God, that had not his mercy led his son our Saviour “ to tread the wine-press “ of his Father’s wrath,” we should still have remained objects of his extreme justice, without a ray, or even glimmering of hope. Wonderful has been the tutelar care which Providence

Providence has ever displayed over little children: Hence a very strong but pious presumption may be encouraged, that this is one of the baptismal blessings. But yet if the conjecture be too bold, and not uniformly founded, there is every rational hope to parents that God will be mindful of them, and on that account variously bless them. God exacts no more of his servants than they are able to perform; and therefore when children arrive to maturity, or an age in which they clearly distinguish the nature and reasons of things, then and only then do the obligations grow out of the covenant, and in divine imputation fix themselves upon those adults without a *second Baptism*: And the act of episcopal confirmation (being of apostolical original) binds the whole covenant upon them in that responsible capacity; so that "instead of milk they are then fed with meat." Children being freed from original sin in the laver of regeneration, and incapable of actual sins, are the objects of God's mercy, and no longer those of his justice; and though they are incompetent to the knowledge of faith, repentance, and obedience, the conditions of the Gospel Covenant, yet Jesus Christ

"suffered

“ suffered little children to come unto him,
 “ took them up in his arms, laid his hands
 “ upon them, (a form of administering some
 benediction) “ and blessed them.” Let not
 Quakers and Anabaptists then mistake the
 point, and think they separate only from the
 established Church ; but let them remember
 that in reality they separate from the church
 militant here on earth.

As this notion of Baptism ought to prevent
 all sloth and carelessness of parents in the
 delay of their duty, so it ought to teach people
 that it is not a bare empty ceremony to be
 idly performed, or lightly gazed upon. It
 is to be considered so essential, that without
 it nothing is right and regular. This being
 the great foundation on which the Church
 of Christ ought to be built, we ought to take
 care that every stone in this great building
 be laid so firm that the superstructure may
 be ever secure, not to be tottered by any
 storm of infidelity, or shaken by any tem-
 pestuous blast of schism. This being done,
 parents are not to rest satisfied with this, and
 think it the whole of their duty ; for how
 justly should we deserve the character of
 folly, nay, the most nauseous folly, if, after
 recom-

recommending children to the blessing of God, we then leave them to fall into the power of the Devil? If we free them from natural corruption, and expose them to all the debauchery of a wicked world? If we enlist them under the banner of Christ, and care not whether they stand or fall? We condemn ourselves in making them children of God by Baptism, unless we strive to make them also perfect men in Christ Jesus. Their profession will serve only the worst of purposes unless they grow in grace, and obtain the end for which they were made Christians. It will be no glory for them to set out boldly against their great adversary, if they suffer him to gain repeated victories over them, lead them captives at his pleasure, and bind them down in everlasting chains of darkness and horror. If, therefore, we would wish them to fight the good fight of faith, we must cloath them in the whole armour of God. If we be at all desirous they should follow the steps of the great captain of their salvation and faint not, we must train them up in the way which they should go.

At a time when any impression may be made, no better can be received than that of religion.

religion. It behoves then all parents, or, if they neglect them, all sponsors, to watch the earliest dawn of infant reason, and to season the mind with the most timely notions of God and goodness. / They are then to learn the knowledge of their Maker ; that God made the world and all that therein is ; that he is a being that has ever existed ; that upon him all things depend, all creatures live, move; and have their being ; and that he is but one. From these principles they are to be taught that him they must worship, and him only ; that they are to pray to him every day for their daily bread, and all other necessities expedient for them ; and as often as they pray they ought to return him thanks for all his blessings, and ascribe all honour and glory to his holy name. They must learn likewise that God is a Being that is every where ; that “ He fills Heaven and Earth, is “ about our paths and about our beds, and “ spies out all our ways ;” that we can go no where from his presence, nor fly any whither from his spirit ; that he is a Being that knows all things, sees all things, searches the hearts of all men, and understands all their thoughts ; that he is infinitely holy, wise, powerful, just and

and true; that whatever actions they perform he is privy to, whatever they think, he knows as well as themselves; that he is so just that he will punish them, and so powerful that he can do it in an instant. In short, from these principles they must fear, love, and obey him cordially and from the soul, put their trust in him, and serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of their life.

But further, they must be taught to believe in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son; that for the salvation of mankind, and to deliver them from hell and destruction, he came down from Heaven; that, as all mankind were under the power of the devil by reason of that corruption entailed by the fall of man, he took our nature upon him, was crucified, died, and rose again, that he might destroy that power of sin and death, that all true Christians might have grace here, and glory hereafter. And that this end might be attained by all, he has made a new covenant with mankind, which they have entered into by Baptism, and in which they have promised to observe those laws which he has set before them; that he will judge all men at the last day according to that covenant, reward the observers, and punish the transgressors of it.

Moreover,

Moreover, they must be taught to believe, that when our Saviour ascended into Heaven, he sent the Holy Ghost, another divine person, continually to guide his church, and sanctify it by his inspiration ; that this divine person dwelleth in every one, and that their bodies in scripture are called his temples ; that he helpeth their infirmities, and intercedes for them before the throne of God with groanings that cannot be uttered ; that they must not pollute themselves with sin, but follow the dictates of conscience, aided by the ready impulse of the Holy Spirit ; that, if they continue in sin, all their prayers are an abomination to the Lord ; that the Holy Ghost will withdraw himself, and leave them to the tendency of their corrupt natures ; that then they can do no good thing which will make them happy when they die, but will be banished from the presence of God and the joys of Heaven, because they forfeited the Communion of the Spirit, and would not suffer it to rule their hearts and sanctify their affections. These instructions are the only foundations of a Christian life. As the belief of a God is the source of natural, so the belief of the Trinity is the basis of the Christian religion.

religion. Without this our duty to ourselves and neighbours must be defective. The want of this occasions great hypocrisy in the church: To this is owing the langour of devotion; and from this proceeds all that inconstancy, which is too visible in our principles and practice.

Not only parents are required to be zealous and diligent in this great duty, but tutors, guardians, masters, and governors, as the substitutes of natural parents, are from their very office obliged to assist in this important charge. They take upon them the duty which parents have resigned to their care, and the civil power gives them all necessary authority to the discharge of it. The chief aim of all learning is to promote the happiness of those who are concerned in it; and therefore mere human literature, or the knowledge of science and languages, is not all they are to impart; but to instruct them in the fear of the Lord, that so they may make their pupils and scholars serviceable and ornamental both to Church and State; good then as well as great, happy as well as illustrious. All masters of families likewise, as deriving all their superiority from God, should never

suffer their own services to interfere with or disturb, or any ways be preferred before the service of God. When God and Mammon call at the same time for attendance, never let Mammon be served first; and whatever things are needful, let them always remember, that "one thing" above all others "is " needful" to us all. Can either masters or servants presume to expect a blessing, when they care not to ask one at God's hands!

But let us take a survey of the duty of spiritual parents, the Ministers of God's word. They very properly bear that name, because they are to contribute, by the doctrine they preach, and sacraments they administer, to the new birth and spiritual life of all the members of Christ's Body: They are to "feed the flock of Christ," give to each part their "meat in due season," and to "watch for them as they that must give an "account." Nothing should warp them from the line of their duty, neither threats, promises, partiality, nor prejudice. They are appointed to instruct ignorant and obstinate old age, as well as train up raw and inexperienced youth. It is their duty to rebuke with all boldness, to exhort with all authority,

authority, to persuade with all meekness: to have compassion on the weak, to convince gainfayers, and with all Christian charity to do the work of an Evangelist. To promote so great a design, parents should early accustom their children to the practice of attending Divine Service, that years may confirm so good an habit, and that they may not only profess their belief, but know what they believe. True knowledge, when it may be acquired, is as much requisite to form a true Christian, as a sincere practice. They are both the joint nerves of our holy Religion, without which Christianity is imperfect; if we take away one we certainly impair both. Ignorance of head, in a country where persons, times, and places, are set apart for publick worship and instruction, is only a flimsy plea, dictated by a depraved, at best a negligent heart. The great Lord of the Christian Household will not be satisfied with the unimproved and lazy talent: He has given us all a sufficiency of grace; 'tis our care that we receive it not in vain. May both pastor and people "return him his own
" with usury!" *Amen.*

S E R M O N II.

 PROVERBS, CHAP. XXII. VER. 6.

Train up a Child in the Way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

AS we are born social creatures, the monastick life can never answer the end of our being. It is not sufficient that we worship God, though we do it with all our heart and all our soul; he further requires, that we should render ourselves instrumental to the happiness and welfare of that society in which we are placed. As we are in a state of probation, which presupposes the exercise of various kinds of virtue, it is necessary we should approve ourselves in things that are most excellent, in things wherein the benefit of others is most promoted, in things in which that virtue is most displayed, which the Apostle describes as superior either to Faith

or Hope. These duties are so closely linked together, that the one cannot subsist without the other: By performing our duty towards our neighbour, we best evidence our duty towards God; by loving our brother, we more effectually convince the world, and ourselves also, that we love God. "For he who loveth
 "not his brother, whom he hath seen, how
 "can he love God whom he hath not seen?"

As these duties are so highly incumbent upon ourselves, it becomes indispensable with parents to inculcate them to youth: They should first be taught who their neighbour is, and next the duty they owe to him. The word neighbour, in its first common acceptation, carries with it the idea only of vicinity; but our Saviour, in the parable of the kind Samaritan, and the whole New Testament, acquaints us, that not only those of the same tribe, city, or nation, deserve that name, but all mankind. How much an expanded liberality of sentiment tends to enrich, adorn, and enlarge every other virtue; indeed, how much all moral excellence receives its birth and nourishment from such an heavenly impulse, wants no other proof than that melancholy one which exhibits itself in
 the

the bitter feuds, keen animosities, and sharp resentments, which are too much indulged amongst us. Viewing the studied malignity which obtains in the world, one would be led to imagine, that instead of worshipping a God of Love, we served only the Devil, the proper father of such hellish ideas.

We are all descended from two common parents: We have all one common Father in Heaven; are all his sons, and therefore brethren: We have all one common Redeemer, and we are all his friends, if we do what he commands us, and imitate that great example of love which equally extends to all: There is one heavenly city designed for us all, and therefore we are truly neighbours one of another. This should be strongly impressed on the minds of children, that instead of that haughtiness, arrogance, affectation, insolence, and superciliousness, which too evidently mark the complexion of the present rising generation, and which are so industriously and shamefully inculcated to them, universal benevolence and charity, courtesy, mildness, and affability, might appear as the fair blossoms of a well cultivated heart. Though there are particular persons to whom, by reason of

different degrees of consanguinity, affinity, friendship, and distance; different degrees of love, honour, and obedience, ought to be paid; yet all mankind, without any exception, have such a title to our charity as is consistent with such degrees. Obedience to parents is the first principle; then a suitable proportionate respect to any distant relation, whether natural, civil, or spiritual; and to all the rest of mankind they must be taught this golden evangelical rule of "doing as they would be done by." To obey the King; to esteem their friends, and be merciful to their enemies; to be submissive to superiors, free to equals, and condescending to inferiors; to help the needy, to comfort the afflicted, and to pray for all sorts and conditions of men; to rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep, are lessons which they should bend about their necks, and write upon the tablet of their hearts. Though sensibility in some cases may prove an enemy to human happiness, yet, if it be not suffered to degenerate into effeminacy, it often acts as a curb upon depravity, a barrier to virtue, and the spring of the softest and most delicate manners. Whatever therefore is savage and barbarous, any thing that has
the

appearance of cruelty, even towards the minutest part of animal life, should be removed from their sight, and discouraged in them. What ought to be removed from their eyes must likewise be forbidden their ears, lest that which Nature first teaches them to abhor, become familiar and pleasant.

But since the two first duties of religion can never be properly, if at all performed, without the collateral aid of private virtues, hence it is necessary that children should always feel a nice sense of modesty, or fear of disgrace. Impudence is not only a disagreeable quality, but a vicious temper; because, as it shakes off the restraint of grace, so 'tis an inlet to, and encourager of all kinds of vice and debauchery. When children have once thrown aside the check of modesty, and hardened their temper, what will they be afraid to attempt? How little will they regard heaping one vice upon another, or defending one fault by the commission of another? What passion will they not humour? What desire will they not gratify? What pleasure of appetite will they not indulge, if they know they have the assurance to carry it off? It is necessary therefore to encourage in children the
passions

passions of Fear and Shame, but to take especial care that they be not placed upon wrong objects, or shew themselves at improper seasons.

As a sister virtue, Temperance should be much recommended. How many and great evils excessive use of meat and drink has brought upon men, is, alas! too evident from daily experience. It has slain many more than either the sword or pestilence: It has no less remarkable influence on the mind than the body: It corrupts and effaces the noble and bright qualities of the one, as well as sows the fatal seeds of distemper in the other. Would parents then make their olive branches luxuriant, they must guard them against an evil that nips the shoot and blasts the blossom; that comes masked with deceit and pregnant with destruction. If they would add to the length of their days, and the number of their years, they must cut off all such means as will certainly tend to cut them off. But under our idea of Temperance falls that of Chastity. To cultivate this virtue they should not only hinder all gross acts of the contrary, and take away all opportunities of committing them, but should highly discourage

rage every lascivious action, all those speeches and gestures which feed a defiled mind. The great reason is obvious ; because incontinency seems to be the most natural infirmity that cleaves to mankind, and is attended with so many unforeseen mischiefs ; most fatal and shameful events ; the loss of reputation and honour ; a load of disgrace and infamy ; and what gives a sad accent to all, the anger of God, whose holiness and purity cannot behold such iniquity and impurity, or suffer them to go unpunished. Those things, which the world may call trifles, are oftentimes the remote causes of the most deplorable effects, and therefore must be shunned with the tenderest suspicion ; because they disarm the mind of that severity which keeps it in a posture of defence, and so more easily open a way for the surreptitious attacks of artifice and the foulest design.

But because those who are engaged in a loose and idle life, are most liable to impressions of this sort, parents should train up their children to diligence. If they would wish them to excel in any thing that is laudable, and be eminently great and good, they should strike out some honest employment for them.

them. He that comes into the world with the most sanguine endeavours after happiness will be opposed by many difficulties, which the wise and good Providence of God, for many gracious purposes, throws in our way : Thousands of incidents, innumerable crosses, various unlucky events, frequently demand all our philosophy to render them even tolerable. How much then to be reprobated is the carelessness of some parents, who indulge their children in laziness and idleness ; nay, prompt them to vicious measures, and so cause them to fall a prey to every stroke of adversity which wounds mankind in every stage of life. Those who have been sojourners in this vale of tears can testify how many and wearisome scenes of life they have encountered ; how difficult it is for some to procure a comfortable subsistence : and for how many more to purchase any tolerable ease or satisfaction. Many, who are blessed with estates already acquired for them, unless they wisely betake themselves to some honourable employment, lead very frequently idle and insignificant lives. They continually offer the Devil an opportunity of tempting them into his service, or else they drown themselves in
the

abyss of sensuality and debauchery of life. Some useful, at least some innocent employment; will drive off the approaches of sin and Satan, and prevent that ruin and destruction which must follow an idle life.

As almost all men are born with all passions to a certain degree, but almost every person has one prevailing one, to which the others are subordinate, and which St. Paul calls "the sin which does so easily beset us," it is incumbent upon all parents to search in every child for that ruling passion; to pry into the recesses of his heart, and observe the different workings of the same passion in the breasts of different children. *Desire, Fear, and Anger*, are chiefly predominant; betray men into grievous sins and deplorable calamities, and destroy the harmony of the world. By these many persons of otherwise good and Christian lives are drawn into wicked and detestable actions. But they are necessary incentives; they are the springs of the soul, by which she acts upon good as well as bad objects. For infinite wisdom has certainly done nothing without some excellent end and purpose, and therefore all those passions which

which he has given us, must, if duly regulated, tend to the ornament, perfection, and happiness of our nature. As no certain rules can be laid down that will suit every case, therefore we may venture to affirm, that as the Divine Being ought to be the object of the whole soul, so his glorious attributes ought to be those of its different passions. His goodness should, in an especial manner, be the object of our love; his mercy that of our hope; his providence that of our confidence; his justice ought to exercise our fear; his anger against sin our aversion to it; and his holiness ought to regulate our desire. Thus God is the most proper object of all our passions: For "we have none in Heaven but him, and there is none on earth that we ought to fear, love, and desire, in comparison of him:" All sublunary beings must share our affections in a secondary degree. Thus should the passions of children be directed and managed; their inordinancy being pruned away, they may prove most excellent instruments of virtue and goodness: And those who otherwise might probably have been the most shameful blemishes, will become illustrious ornaments to human nature.

As

As for reproof and correction, great circumspection is necessary to investigate the faults of children ; much greater prudence in adapting punishments to their different tempers and nature of the crime. To the want of a rational attention to this point is owing so much hardness of heart, so many daring impieties, so many shameful and lamentable events which stain mankind. Hence vice and immorality erect their eagle standard, and with more than Roman fury demolish the temples of virtue : Hence is the name of the great God taken in vain, his holy Sabbath and sanctuaries profaned : Hence the most flagrant depredations, deformed by the murderous hand, are committed without remorse : And hence the most base and horrid acts of assassination and adultery gain ground, coloured over with the specious names of Gallantry and Honour. Did but parents early correct their children, when vice advances but slow, and iniquity blushes to shew its head ; did they but seriously nip sin in the bud, before it flourished so much, and spread itself so far and wide ; did they but lay aside that foolish and corrupt fondness for their children, they would probably prevent floods
of

of tears and lamentations, when the heavy arm of public justice was stretched out against them.

But the very best advice, the most persuasive eloquence, the most affectionate addresses and exhortations, when example speaks a different language, must prove abortive, must fail of success. Whenever therefore, ye parents, ye swear, or lie, or are passionate, or come drunk into your family, reflect how it lessens the authority of your commands, and weakens all the obedience you expect. Thou, therefore, that teachest thy children to tell truth, dost thou tell an untruth? Thou that teachest them not to swear, dost thou profane the name of God by customary oaths and curses? Thou that commandest them to keep the Sabbath-day, dost thou make it a day of trade and merchandize, of riot and frotting at the alehouse? In vain are the paths of life shewn to them, if they be thus drawn into the ways of death and destruction; if example destroy that end which instruction aims at. Our minds naturally lapse from precept, and look up only to the living influence of example: It's impulse grows up with us, and probably fixes our character.

Every

Every thing that is young and inexperienced is forward to imitate those among whom it is most conversant. The brutes imitate those whence they spring, and launch out into the same way of action and living. Now children themselves at an early period have little more knowledge than brutes ; not a sufficiency at most to guard against the early prejudices of education and power of example. That knowledge which discriminates good and evil, and which is called *Judgment*, creeps slowly on after long and diligent observation, instruction, and experience ; whereas their simple apprehension is struck by those about them. Hourly occurrences teach us how sily and almost insensibly example works into habit itself. That is the age then for sowing those seeds of learning and goodness, which being duly cultivated and nourished by example, will probably produce a plentiful harvest of wisdom and virtue. A man may be bred up a great scholar, and prove a very bad man : He may abound in all the learning and ingenuity of the philosopher or wit, and yet much more abound in vices and follies of every shape : And why ? Because his best instructions have been choaked or over-run by

poisonous weeds of bad examples either at home or at publick schools. Suitable correction may at first startle him, and whilst under the rod or fear of punishment, he may be reduced within some bounds; but take away the severity, and the turn of mind will be fixed upon living objects. If instruction do not grow up with goodness, it is worse to be learned and bad than good and unlearned; much better to go to Heaven without much learning, than to be the most distinguished, though learned sinner in Hell. If parents then wish their children to be good, they must be good themselves; not go before them in any evil thing, but always propose something worthy their imitation. But I must not forget to urge upon your attention your earnest and constant prayers to God for them: That he would be pleased to give them his grace, to instruct them in all the necessary knowledge of their duty, to order their goings in his way, to increase those gifts he has been pleased to confer upon them, and to prosper all their honest and sincere endeavours for his glory and their own happiness. Such an humble and devout address to the Fountain of all Goodness cannot fail to derive

rive a blessing upon all they wish and all they do. Be often then upon your knees for your children ; ask and ye shall obtain ; seek and ye shall find grace to help in time of need ; knock and the doors of Heaven shall be open to your prayers, and pour down all those blessings which are necessary and expedient for them in this their dreary, desolate, and hazardous pilgrimage.

Soldiers thus trained up will fight the battles of the Lord of Hosts with success ; being “ strong in the Lord, and in the power “ of his might, the enemy shall not be able “ to do them violence, the Son of Wicked- “ nefs shall not hurt them.” They will adorn those stations of life in which God has placed them, and be always useful in their generation. Every private virtue will so flourish as to strengthen the springs of public good : And those flagrant violations of charity, which engender broils both in Church and State, will be softened into unity and concord. Happy is that nation through whose soil the seeds of early instruction are disseminated ; and praise-worthy are those parents that prepare their children as so many public blessings to mankind.

But parents themselves will reap the fruit of all their vigilance by the most joyous comfort in their own breasts: To be loaded however with no self-reproach, no guilt of neglect, must make their "hoary head a real crown of glory," because "found in the way of righteousness:" And when they lie upon their death-bed, how will their pain and sickness be soothed, how greatly will the terrors of death be taken off, how much more sedately will they resign themselves to the Lord, when they and their house have constantly served him? What an assuring hope that he will give a blessing to their surviving children; will, while they live, guide them with his grace and council, and after a well spent life, receive them into glory. But in the reverse, let parents consider how they will answer for their neglect at the last tremendous day of accounts before the just and righteous Judge of all the Earth. How will it make their ears tingle, and their hearts tremble, when he shall arise in terrible Majesty to judgment, and thus solemnly address them: "Behold before your eyes the children
 " I have given you: I commanded you to
 " teach them, to restrain their rambling im-
 " pulse,

“ pulse, but you have cast my commands be-
 “ hind you: Why did you not instruct them
 “ at home, and bring them into my courts,
 “ to render me my due honour, to celebrate
 “ my attributes with praise, and attend at
 “ my table? But you have not only neg-
 “ lected to give them proper instruction, and
 “ lop off the wild shoots of their vicious sal-
 “ lies, but have yourselves exhibited the worst
 “ of examples: As they have followed it,
 “ Lo! now they shall follow you to Hell,
 “ since you would not lead them the way to
 “ Heaven: They shall accompany the Devils,
 “ whom they have served, in everlasting dark-
 “ ness, since you would not suffer me to be
 “ their Master, or make them Saints in Light.
 “ Since you have abused those powers I ves-
 “ ted you with, they shall be an addition to
 “ your own torments. How could you be
 “ thus deaf to all the calls of natural affec-
 “ tion? How could you stop your ears against
 “ the voice of Reason, and act worse than
 “ the brutes whom I have created inferior to
 “ you? But further, how dare you disobey
 “ those commands you have read in my holy
 “ word, and which have been so often pressed
 “ upon you by the Ministers of my Gospel?

“ How could you thus hate your own flesh,
 “ and even your own souls ? How much bet-
 “ ter had it been for them, and yourselves too,
 “ had neither of you ever been born ? ” How
 will your children challenge and reproach
 you in that great and terrible day of the Lord ?
 Imagine the anguish that will, that must tor-
 ture you, when their judgment is passing
 upon them ; to hear their piercing shrieks,
 their bitter cries, their doleful howlings, and
 the terrible execrations they will then utter
 against you ; “ Cursed be the man that begat
 “ me, the womb that bare me, and the paps
 “ which I have sucked.”

Thus shall it be : This is the shocking ac-
 count that must be passed. Be wise in time,
 and no longer neglect so necessary a duty :
 Make your children therefore “ remember
 “ their Creator in the days of their youth,”
 and whatever else you teach them, be sure to
 teach them the fear of the Lord. Are plen-
 tiful estates designed for them ? Let them be
 taught by the principles of true religion a
 good and pious use of them. Do you hoard
 up the perishing riches of this world for them ?
 Above all things lay up for them the never-
 failing treasures of Heaven ? Do you solicit
 for

for them the favour of great men? Rather strive to engage the favour of the Most High, and the protection of the King of Kings. Would you have them great, first make them good; for religion only can make them truly so. But suppose the scene changed, and they be poor, they may become "rich in good works:" If they be obscure, virtue will make them shining lights: If they be forced to beg their bread, the bread of life may be distributed to them: Must they wander naked and forlorn? Let them be cloathed with piety and goodness, and these will secure to them the protection of an all-wise and good Providence: Must they submit to slavery? They may be taught how they may be truly free: Are they, like Lazarus, to lie famished and full of sores at the stern rich man's gates? Let them be found in the faith, let them be filled with righteousness; then a sufficient and happy provision will be made for them; they will then be carried by their kind guardian angels into Abraham's bosom: So that having received their evil things in this life, a few dark days being past and gone, they may enjoy everlasting sun-shine and tranquillity in that which is to come.

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S E R M O N III.

ISAIAH, CHAP. LVII. VER. 15.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

THE majestic manner in which this passage is ushered in, should, one would imagine, check the impetuous career of folly, and make it stop to think. To reflect only one moment, in our inadequate and finite manner, upon the attributes of the Deity here displayed, and by himself declared to belong to him, should teach us, nay constrain us, "to stand in awe, and to sin not." Who can revolve in his mind the words *High, Lofty, Eternity, Holy*, and combine them

them in one subject, without shrinking back into his little self, and hiding his obscurity in the lowest abasement? He high and lofty, whom no being can approach, whose essence no created understanding can ever explore, and whom even "Kings and Princes must worship." We, on the contrary, mere dust and ashes, taken from the ground, so insignificant as to be created by a mere word, and in the eye of Parent Omnipotence as "Grasshoppers" upon the face of nature. He "who inhabiteth eternity," that puzzles the mind of man, and bids the whole earth keep silence before him; we, poor, helpless, infirm creatures, ever exposed to the destructive power of every element, (kindly designed indeed to nourish as well as destroy) and like myriads of the sunny tribe, the beings only of a summer's day. He, "whose name is Holy," whom no impurity can approach, whom the most perfect angel can never look upon, and before whom the pure brightness of the Sun is ashamed to put forth its rays; we, on the contrary, by nature impure, by sin polluted, by disobedience loathsome, prone to evil, and often, too often averse to good.

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There is no one characteristic so familiar to the Prophets in their description of the Deity than the height of his dwelling: Not that God, properly speaking, can be said to be confined to any particular situation; for being a spirit, he has no corporeal parts, and being an infinite spirit, knows no bounds; but the expression seems to accommodate itself to our sentiments and conduct. In common life, when we wish to confer upon a person any particular eminence, or to give greater sanction to authority, we generally place it upon a throne, or some place elevated above those over whom it is intended to preside: To fall in then with our mode of thinking, and to render language congenial to our own practice, the holy penman puts this in the mouth of God, "I dwell in the high and holy place;" *high* to shew the immense distance between him and us, and *holy* to teach us that if ever we wish to inhabit the same place, we must observe this precept, "Be ye holy, for I am holy;"—to teach us further, that no unclean, no unholy thing can enter there, and that upon our own conviction we condemn ourselves for not paying that respect to his excellent heavenly Majesty which

which we every day acknowledge due to poor earthly authority.

From this comparative view, how easily are we led to possess our minds with those virtues which naturally prepare us for our communion with him? If we seriously consider God's exalted nature, we must be *humble*; and if we turn our eyes in upon our souls, and there view the sins, miscarriages, and offences, by which we every hour provoke that great God, we cannot but be *contrite*. And what an high honour does God confer upon those qualifications which even common sense and reason inspire, when he declares in the text, that he will "dwell with them that are of an humble and contrite spirit." Since humility then be so essential to so high an honour, to so great an happiness, how much is it to be lamented that the human breast affords it so little entertainment? What pity so much pride, self-sufficiency, and false importance should make us forget the God that made us; should swell us into the imaginary size of Gods upon earth, and so challenge to the creature that worship which alone is due to the Creator! The motives to humility are so numerous, that to urge them upon the
attention

attention of my reader would be an insult to his common sense and understanding: No man wants to be taught so much as to be put in mind of this duty: Every one must know that 'tis his duty to be so, but the misfortune is, the leaven of vanity blows up our imaginations; we are seized with an over-weaning conceit of ourselves; and like the Devil in his revolt, we aspire to a condition, to a sphere which God and Nature never intended for us. As there are many in the world who have their unguarded moments, and contrary to their conviction, contrary to their wishes, yield to the attacks of pride, so there are many more, I fear, who lay their bosoms open to it, nourish the horrid monster, and, upon any little check of conscience, throw all the blame upon the nature of their constitution, as if God made men proud, and then punished them for being so. It is common to hear it observed, "Such a man is so and so, but, poor man! he cannot help it, 'tis constitutional." But this is such a gross delusion, such a studied fallacy, as tend only to render us careless and secure in our vices, and never to set one foot forward towards repentance and amendment of life. When
men

men have once quieted their consciences, and fortified their minds with such sentiments as these; when they can once prevail upon themselves to think that their favourite vice (whatever it be) results from their constitution, they immediately decline all opposition to it; they conclude it in vain to attempt to reform what in their opinion cannot be altered; and at last expire (perhaps on the fatal tree) with this horrid predestinarian notion, that *God had decreed it*. How careful therefore ought mankind to be, how they encourage a plea which has so obdurate a tendency, and by which they so impiously blaspheme God, instead of reproving and amending themselves.

It may appear a strange proposition, amounting almost to a paradox, that pride and humility, though repugnant to each other, are sometimes found very near relations. It is not, I hope, uncharitable, or a discouragement to humility, to say, that there is frequently a great deal of pride wrapped up in the cloathing of humility: But give me leave to observe, that such humility as is exercised only to attract the eye of men, does not however escape the eye of God, who will punish all

all such hypocrisy as a bane to real virtue. Whoever looks narrowly into men and manners will often be grieved at the occurrence of such instances, and will, in my opinion, prefer rank pride to such proud humility. For whatever is spurious in morality always inflicts a wound on real goodness; and for a man to pretend to be humble when he is really not so, conveys to mankind some little right of suspecting those who may be free from such a duplicit principle: But since the heart is acknowledged to lie beyond the reach of human enquiry, we should always suspend our judgment in such cases, lest the innocent suffer with the guilty.

Was pride, like any external habit, to be put off at our exit, and left behind us; did pride affect the body only as a troublesome appendage, and not touch the soul as its greatest enemy, the insolence it too often generates might be considered as one of those little trifling impertinencies which we meet with in our journey through life: But here is the misfortune, it puffs up human nature so much beyond our real condition, that we will not think, at least forget, that we need pardon and protection: That all-sufficiency,
which

which we so vainly ascribe to ourselves, supercedes all sense of our spiritual necessities, and "strengthens us in our wickedness." Under such a predicament no wonder if we say in the fullness of our heart, "what is God that we should seek him, or the Almighty that we should serve him?"

While the proud spirit of rebellious men can bask in the sunshine of prosperity, he never once dreams that the rod of God may soon pass upon him: "God shall suddenly shoot at him with a swift arrow;" a tempest shall arise from a quarter he little suspected, nay from a cloud "the bigness of a man's hand," and burst destructive over his guilty head. Then the voice of conscience, hitherto unhappily silenced, shall ring peals of vindictive thunder in his ears: And then, not till then perhaps, the poor fool sculks for shelter under the wings of that Providence, which before he scarce deigned to acknowledge, or perhaps flatly denied. In short, he treats his God as he would his menial servant, he never calls upon him but when he really wants him. Now would not the proud miscreant himself resent such behaviour from any of his own dependants, who thus trifled with and
abused

abused his power and goodness? Most probably he would: But our Heavenly Father "is God and not Man:" He is, and for such wretches sake he need be, "merciful and of tender kindness;" otherwise, how could the vain heart of man ever once conceive that he will listen to the cries of those who never call upon him but "in the great water floods," who seek him only with their lips, and never approach him with their heart. But such lip service, bare confession with the mouth, can never avail at the day of judgment, only to condemn us out of the same mouth: Such repentance, like the morning cloud chased before the sun, quickly passeth away; having no root it is soon scorched by the heat, withereth, and "brings no fruit to perfection." No; 'tis "with the heart that man believeth unto righteousness;" 'tis the humble and heart-felt sorrow for sin that pierces the clouds, and opens the ears of the Almighty; and 'tis the "humble and contrite ones" only that he has promised "to revive."

The general misconduct of mankind shews that "few commune in their hearts" upon the goodness and power of God, till they feel the removal of that goodness, and the stroke

of that power by the hand of adversity. They then "bow themselves before the high " God ;" they then humble themselves before the Lord, as they pretend with broken and contrite hearts : But such humility, springing from external considerations, can never engage the patronage of Heaven : Such contrition, or rather attrition, carries in it too much sense of present pain and fear of future punishment to ground any comfortable hope. It is true, and often happens, I charitably presume, that the pointed arrow of affliction probes to the bottom the wounds of a sinner's soul, and may prove the beginning of a never-ending repentance : In such an hopeful case, the Almighty, who views the recesses of the human heart as clearly as we survey the superficies of the human face, " lifts up his countenance upon him," strengthens him by his grace, fills him with hidden comforts, and maketh the right way acceptable to him. Happy, thrice happy they, whose minds are so disposed as to feel the influence of the Divine favour working in their hearts ; who, even while they are here, taste those precious comforts flowing in upon their souls, which the provisions of
this

this paltry world can never administer : But purer and greater than these are still to be found " in the high and holy place where he " dwells, who inhabiteth eternity, whose " name is Holy." This general doctrine, which I have now laid down as a bare system of morality, applies itself to a mere Heathen, one who " never heard the name " of Christ," and may bring him to Heaven : But we, who call ourselves Christians, and have entered into the solemn vow of the Christian Covenant, must further remember, that without the benefit of the grand atonement there can be no salvation. Without a serious and closely applied sense of what our Saviour did and suffered for us, we shall ever " be in our sins : " Without it our repentance is mere froth, our humility mere hypocrisy, and our best works only filthy rags. Christ crucified can only plead our cause ; And " except we eat the flesh of the Son of Man, " and drink his blood, we have no life in us." For his merits then, who alone can save us, let us pray to be admitted into those mansions where " dwells the high and lofty One " for ever and ever."

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 God has said and written for us, we shall ever
 "be in our sins." Without it our religion
 is more foolish than humanity more "profane,"
 and our best works only filthy rags. Our
 crucifix can only plead our case, and
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 and drink his blood, we cannot live in us."
 For his merits then, who alone can save us,
 let us pray to be admitted into one of his
 holy where "dwells the high and lofty One"
 "for ever and ever."

S E R M O N IV.

PSALM LXXVII. VER. 3.

*When I am in heaviness, I will think upon God;
when my heart is vexed, I will complain.*

So numerous are the disasters and perplexities that embitter human life, that there is scarce a moment in which we may justly think ourselves secure. Either our bodies or minds, or both, are continually attacked and wounded by the forest evils: Some miseries we forge for ourselves from the materials of vicious inclination and fashionable habit, whilst others are inflicted upon us by the hand of Providence, for reasons best known to God himself; among which, no doubt, goodness is the leading motive. How many this moment drink the water of affliction, and eat the bitter bread of misery? How many, tumbled from the height of hal-

cyon days, now shrink into the sordid hut of cheerless poverty? How many, envenomed by the blackest passions, shake with the fiercest tortures? And how many, racked by honest desires, serving under friendship's banner, but unserved, droop into deep, retired distress. These, and a thousand other nameless ills, render life one incessant struggle, one scene of toil, of suffering, and of cruel fate. Thus painted, what is life? What can be hoped, what can be expected, what can we enjoy from it? Its vicissitudes deceive us; its changes perplex us; its instability will never bear the weight of the most slender dependence: Our expectations are infinitely bigger than our enjoyments, and our supposed happiness seldom within our reach, and seldom a single minute insured to us. What we possess one hour we are deprived of the next, and even that which constitutes our supreme comfort, flies from our embrace, and leaves the soul empty, pining and dissatisfied: The poisoned dagger plunges into the depth of the heart, and rankles among the vitals.

Whither then in such a state can we recur for succour and relief? To mankind, perhaps: No: Hypocrisy too much dwells upon the
face

face of mortals: Crocodiles like, when they weep, they intend to destroy; when they fawn, they bite; and when with a Janus-faced aspect they offer you service, beware of the deadly poison: "The words of his mouth were softer than butter, having war in his heart; his words were smoother than oil, and yet be they very swords." They court your friendship by day, and stab you in the night. Thus guileful and detestable are the ways of man, formed in the image of God, but transformed into that of the Devil; created in the pure lustre of candour, benevolence, and the softest power of disinterested wishes; but alas! now obscured by the corrosive rust of enmity, suspicions, jealousies, evil surmises, ill-natured reproaches, false accusations, and the whole tribe of hellish ideas. Some will not, some cannot, others dare not stretch out the assisting hand: Malevolence and the worst of peevish resentments sour the sweetness of natural peace, and smother conviction in their breasts: Impossibility lays an heavier weight on some, and crushes their fullest exertion: Whilst others, whose bosom opens wide to the cause, and from whose heart flow the purling streams of sympathy and love, are checked

checked by a fear of the petulance and weak rebukes of narrow-minded mortals.

Thus foiled by the precarious world, thus deceived by faithless mankind, what can we wretched creatures avail ourselves in? Depend upon ourselves, that dependence is frothy, ever exposed to the destructive blast. There we can find nothing but the soul-distracting view of misery and horror, impotency, and frail efforts: Even our strongest arguments prove too weak for our comfort: Our soundest philosophy, the very depth of learning, is too shallow to ground the basis of the least relief: Our most forcible reasonings give false peace but a little moment, when our dreadful situation recoils with double fury, and involves our minds in a fresh storm of calamitous thoughts. Thus festered by vexations, racked by disappointments, and corroded by losses, we are tossed in the tumultuous hurricane of life; like the dove dispatched from the ark, we wander in search of rest, but never find it till we return to the same ark, the riches and fullness of a God.

In all our distresses, and evils of every kind, how natural is it to fly to the object that can grant redress? Yet though naturally, how ill
checked directed

directed we are! We run to the Creature instead of the Creator, we find no satiety, and then at last repine at Providence; how unjust, and yet how common! We see the world is fluctuating, mankind selfish, and ourselves insufficient: We know that no evils can afflict where his omnipotence shields, that no schemes can prove abortive which his wisdom directs, that nothing can prove troublesome which his goodness bestows, that no despair can touch our peace when his bowels yearn after us; and that though we live "in the valley of the shadow of death," we need "fear no evil; he is with us; his rod and his staff comfort us." Leaning on that staff we may trudge through the rugged difficulties of this wicked and perverse generation; confiding in this truth, we may laugh at the hypocrisy of a sycophant race of mortals; and looking up to the rock whence we are hewn, we may stand, like monuments of adamant, and outbrave the fury of the storms of earthly distress. Whilst we fix our affections upon terrene concerns, even upon that which we most delight in, we find no solid enjoyment, no lasting satisfaction; there is a chasm in the mind, still something wanting; but

but raise our thoughts to the contemplation of a God, then the soul is arrived to the highest mark of her longings, finds herself feasted beyond the power of its former taste, and so cleaveth unto him as a thirsty land. But the misfortune is, that this affiance too seldom proceeds from choice: We live upon our weakness and vanity as long as we can; we strive frequently to comfort ourselves, but all in vain; we buoy ourselves up in the rapid torrent of human efforts, till the waters of misery overwhelm all our hopes, and hastily remit us to God. "When we are in heaviness," (and only in heaviness 'tis too frequently the case) we think upon him; we pay him the compliment of dancing attendance to our last necessitous shifts, and presume to think that he will be ready to relieve us: But, mistaken Man! consider that his mercy is not at our, but his discretion; that misfortune, during their repeated back-slidings, shall slay the ungodly; and that by a perseverance in riotous confidence, "his loving kindness will be shut up in displeasure:" Affliction, with its iron rod, will scourge thee with the stripes of vengeance, and make thee fear, but thou must love:

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Heedless rambling impulse must learn to think, from the experience of adversity must be taught the lessons of duty, and from admiring the blessings of Heaven, adore the perfections of the donor.

When our hearts are vexed, when they are severely smitten with sorrow, and sicken with their own wounds; in short, when human nature can no longer support itself, but almost falls a victim to despair; then the principles of Religion, imbibed in our youth, will fully exert their persuasion, will fill our minds with instructive sentiments of acquiescence, and with the hand of tenderness lead us to the refreshing fountain of comfort, there to suck up the soothing draughts of living water, and to feed on morsels of tranquillity. How does the soul rejoice when thus directed! How readily does she embrace her dearest guide Religion, and follow her steps into the pasture of ease. Without thee, O Religion, what were unenlightened Man? A savage, rude, void of every moral excellence, every social bliss, every tenderness, and every virtue that can refine the droffy corruption of life, and render us more like the God we ought to worship; ought, I say, because

because few comparatively have zeal enough to address him "in spirit and truth." Thy soul-inspiring virtues should warm the conscious heart of charity, should dilate the wide wish of benevolence, should raise the social sigh, and even the social tear, and improve the passions into their original and refined excellence: But alas! degenerate Man! View thy own works the reverse of Christian conduct. Instead of charity are fostered the cruel, relentless, and merciless sentiments of the Cynic system: Instead of benevolence, is entertained a studied hatred, an industriously conceived abhorrence; and instead of friendship, that pure ingenuous elegance, that delicate refinement known to few, is substituted the suspicious, distant, haughty reserve: But "O my Soul, come not into their counsel; "into their assembly, mine honour, be not "thou united;" but trust in God and make thyself for ever happy.

If we confide in the world, and its appendant chain of delusions, we must for ever, day after day, be destitute of bliss; but if we attend to the duties of Christianity, believe in a God and Saviour, and firmly trust in both, our affliction will not have half its influence
upon

upon us ; the keen edge of adversity will be blunted by pious meditation ; and the objects of our happiness here will soon lose their charms. We cannot overcome our attachment to this world more speedily, or more effectually, than by considering how weak we are ourselves, and how all-sufficient is God. Reflect that a few years, a few compared with eternity, will place us in the silent oblivion of the grave, and put an end to all our most torturing feelings either of mind or body ; when every object of our tenderest wishes shall be hidden from our shrouded eyes, and every passion of the human breast shall cease its throbbings, and, like ourselves, be no more ; no more disturb our quiet ; no more embroil our peace.

Before the stroke of vengeance then reaches our hairy scalp, as well as under a sense of it, let our thoughts, our first and last, be directed to God. We should always remember that his will involves our whole destiny, that he gave us being, provides for our well-being, and in a moment can deprive us of every joy, every pleasing sensation ; and that every our best purposes must be resolved into the fatherly direction of the Almighty :

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If he permit, however improbable, whatever unfavourable circumstances now appear, it will come to pass; if not, it is for our good only, or the punishment of some vice, that he denies us the completion of our warmest wishes. Resignation therefore to the will of Heaven, in all cases that concern us, should begin with the dawn of our reason, and attend us through life. It is that which gives a sanction to the performance of all other duties; for he who dares not resign himself to God, cannot properly be said either to love his mercy or fear his justice: To talk of being religious without an entire acquiescence in his pleasure, is as absurd as to pretend to Christianity without faith. To the God of all Peace let us, one and all, commend our spirits, and pray him to enlighten our understandings to the comprehension of the Divine word: And let us remember, and never cease to acknowledge with the most fervent zeal, that it is God alone who helpeth us, and showers down all our blessings, both spiritual and temporal, upon us; upon us who, the best of us all, are totally unworthy the very smallest boon that Heaven with mercy can bestow: To render ourselves the more worthy,

worthy, we must be devout towards God without any hypocrify or will-worship, sincere to mankind without the leaven of malice, and just and rational in the regulation of our own lives.

SERMON

[illegible]

31 MAY 1964

S E R M O N V.

ACTS, CHAP. XIII. VER. 38, 39.

38. *Be it known unto you, therefore, Men and Brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins :*

39. *And by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*

THE Revelation of the Gospel by Jesus Christ was such a mystery as proved "to the Jews a stumbling block," and appeared "to the Greeks foolishness." Though the stock of Abraham had been separated from the other nations of the world, distinguished by so many marks of the Divine favour, and constantly indulged with private communications of the will of Heaven, yet, a

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few only excepted, their eyes were constantly holden that they could or would not see the truth. Though the "Glory of the Lord" shone round about them," yet it only "made" them afraid ;" though it dazzled, yet it did not strike conviction upon their understandings. With all the helps and assistances of their law, though "written by the finger of "God," they only looked to the mere superficialities of religion: They were not of themselves sufficient to make this great discovery, which St. Paul in my text plainly declared to them.

The Heathen world likewise, with all their boasted knowledge, succeeded no better. Though the sun of science shone so brightly in those two eminent seats of learning Greece and Rome, and though their moral disquisitions were so replete with ingenious and sublime remarks as to claim our attention, nay our boast, even in these more enlightened days; yet a barrier was fixed to their progress, and seemed to prove that their understandings were competent to every mode of learning but that of a perfect atonement: That height of knowledge was to be the distinctive privilege of a few poor fishermen,
 who,

who, ignorant of the subtle reasoning of philosophy, and those far-fetched arguments which tend more to perplex than illustrate, could without art or sophistry declare the soundest truths. Could human nature, unassisted, have dived into the depth of this mystery of godliness, we may so far honour and compliment Antiquity as to say, that *her* sons might have claimed the laurels.

But “ they only saw through a glass darkly:” That medium, which with refracted rays caused merely a reflex twilight upon their minds, was not yet rarified by the sun of righteousness: The influence of its meridian height is reserved for us to bask in, to solace ourselves under its fostering beams, and by its genial warmth to revive those souls which were grown cold by sinful death. How insensible are we then to the high honour we bear, how blind to our own interest, how callous to those feelings that should possess a guilt-eaten heart, when we suffer the weak efforts of Heathen intellect to put Christian ignorance to the blush; when we suffer any bauble, any gilded toy, the sycophant’s smile, the tyrant’s nod, or the siren’s voice, to decoy our affections; and when we suffer our

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supposed,

supposed, our pharisaical perfection, to warp us from a sound judgment, and the natural humility of a sinner. It is a sense of our sins that can alone impress us with the necessity of an atonement: Unless we humble ourselves in sackcloth and ashes, and feel the poignancy of that contrition which, like a barbed arrow, not only perforates, but sticks in a penitent's heart, the notion of forgiveness must lose its weight. "Who can tell how oft he offendeth?" The number, the degree, the guilt of our sins, may, must fall infinitely short of our recollection or estimation: "They are more in number than the hairs of our head," and when we attempt to count them, "our heart must fail us:" "They are a sore burden, too heavy for us to bear," and when the galled shoulder seek relief, it sinks under the weight. The guilt of them can only be estimated by the expence of the pardon, by the dignity and love of that person through whose blood only they are forgiven. The Son of God himself "trode the wine-press of his Father's wrath" alone: No angel, no man, no creature, was found sufficient for this great work. How must God hate sin then to be satisfied with no meaner

meaner sacrifice? How much must he love man to part with the son of his bosom? To put his own heir to shame, and suffer the husbandmen to kill him? Of all men, most miserable are they who are affected neither with the merits of a Saviour nor the sense of their own sins; who constantly run the giddy round of fashionable levities, and who, were they not led to church by custom, or looser motives, would never care for God nor have God in all their thoughts. It hurts the mind of Christian charity to reflect upon their state, to reflect that just as they are going to die they are then only beginning to live; that when the thread of their existence be reduced to the mere size of an hair, the sword of justice pendant from it, they should then look up to the promised reward only from the fear of punishment: But alas! rewards object not themselves to their hopes: They are only reserved for such as "work out their salvation with fear and trembling;" for such as love God, because they hate the sins which he hates; and for those who with the best grounded hope "look up unto Jesus," the author of all our blessings here, and the finisher of all our glory hereafter.

But “ be not deceived : God will not be “ mocked.” The sacrifice of Christ does not act upon our souls as charms do upon our bodies : We are not to imagine that his blood will wash our souls clean, when we are every day and hour adding filth to filth : We are not to think that it will “ purge our consciences from dead works,” when we display no real life in our actions, but serve the Devil instead of “ the living God.” Our Saviour has established his own terms, and we cannot reverse them. The Jewish law was the law of a carnal commandment, consisting of divers washings, purifications, and external ordinances ; even their sacrifices were accepted only as types of the Messiah : But now “ He “ has put his law into our hearts, in our “ minds has he written them ;” and if we be but careful to make these the seats of our obedience, “ our sins and iniquities will he “ remember no more.”

Now the terms of the Gospel are such as ground an appeal even to common sense ; they are such as every prudent man in worldly matters would not hesitate one moment to embrace. For what so reasonable as that the purchaser of our redemption should lay us under

under what restrictions he pleased? What so natural as to believe his merits from whom we receive such inestimable benefits? What so interesting as to listen to his proposals, when every moment we feel, that without his grace we can do nothing? "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned:" What proposition can be marked by stronger language? Good God! to be saved! Dreadful Heaven! to be damned! Weigh these two sentences in the scales of common discretion, and ask ourselves which we ought to choose: If conviction stare us in the face, why not comply with the conditions? Why not believe, when the prophecies, literally fulfilled by the events, all point to him as the Saviour of the whole world? To him, who confirmed his mission by his various miracles, but centered and finished them all in that one, his Resurrection from the dead. But bare believing is only acting like devils: It is merely trembling at the judgments of our Saviour, but not working up our souls unto his righteousness. Repentance and obedience are enjoined us, on purpose to implant in our breasts that congeniality, that similarity to his perfection and purity,

purity, which alone can establish a society with Jesus. Unless in the best, but still the most imperfect manner, we conform to his image, it is impossible we should ever be received into that bosom where dwell peace, comfort, and the fullness of joy. To constitute happiness there must be a correspondence between the object and the heart: If the object be spiritual, the heart must be refined of the dross of its corruption: If the object be all mercy and kindness, our heart must put away from it all malice, revenge, and such like brutal passions: If the object be, in short, that God whom we ought to love rather than fear, our hearts must in the best degree possible be attuned unison to his moral perfections: So that if God exhibit the *Governor* in commanding our obedience, yet he more lovingly displays the *Parent* in exhorting us to repentance, that so being changed in heart and mind, he may at last take us unto himself, delight in us as his offspring, "begotten again unto a lively hope," and make us sit in heavenly places as joint heirs with Christ. Surely we must be lost to a sense of ambition (a passion too often misguided and directed to unworthy objects)

not

not to pant after such divine communion, not to wish at least to be with our God.

But here I cannot help remarking, with what pity I view those self-deluded wretches who would willingly persuade the world that they have found a flaw in that scheme which infinite wisdom has concerted and adjusted. What a reflection upon common sense once to imagine that the Son of God should quit his glory, and subject himself to all the appendages of a base mortality, if his Revelation could have been dispensed with; if poor, weak, purblind reason, could alone have discovered the will of Heaven! It is to suppose God one of the most capricious as well as inexorable tyrants, not to be contented with any other satisfaction but the sacrifice of his own Son. It is worse than *human* folly to employ extraordinary means, when the more common and ordinary ones might have answered every reasonable purpose: This is such an absurdity as we can never charge upon God. The great champion of the Free-thinkers at last shuddered at the force and brightness of that Revelation which all his life long he ridiculed and affected to despise. His intellect, the boasted luminary of the world,

world, which, like a blazing comet, swept destruction in its train, too late recoiled upon itself, and kindled its own horrors. Unhappy man! to fortify himself against conviction; but by the lashes of agonizing guilt forced to confess his folly! Necessitated to prove more by his death than he could ever disprove by his writings or life!

But these are not the only "enemies of the Cross of Christ." Others there are who endeavour to sap the foundation of Christianity by denying the doctrine of the *Trinity*. It is the glory of our church to distinguish ourselves by a mystery authenticated by Scripture, and which has God for its author. But these men, not content with the only evidence it is capable of, the veracity of God, hold it up to the clear light of mathematical demonstration, and fancying they spy out a contradiction in terms, attempt to prove what in its own nature must be obscure. They strive to make that an object of sense which is only discernible by the eye of faith, and to illustrate by reason that which is supernatural and confessedly above it. These are some relations to the former set of men, trusting to the bruised reed of a little, weak, fallible under-

understanding, which at last, I fear, " will pierce them through with many sorrows." But, good God ! Shall we thus dispute thy word, call in question our Saviour's doctrine, " who spake as never man spake," and instead of these authorities hold up a small taper to assist us to discover the Sun ? No : Let the prowess of human intellect shrink into its little self, and thus conceal its presumptuous insignificancy.

" Knowing the terrors of the Lord," and the heavy judgments that impend over the heads of such vain persons, " we persuade men." It must ever be remembered then, that unless God had graciously condescended to reveal his will to us in his Gospel, the law of reason, nor yet the Jewish law, though it was a schoolmaster, could never have brought us unto Christ. Man had sinned ; who was to appease the divine wrath ? There was no days-man betwixt God and us to reconcile him to us : Who could have expected such a glorious redemption, such an efficacious atonement ? As the " Jew could not be justified by the law of Moses," so we Christians are in no better predicament, unless we constantly look up with steadfast faith to that
victim

victim which is still bleeding upon the altar, and interceding before the throne with groanings which cannot be uttered ; unless we render his atonement and intercession effectual by repentance and obedience ; and unless we garnish our souls, and make them an habitation fit for the spirit.

Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, but do not perish : Let not such stupendous love be thrown away upon you. Draw from the fountain of life such draughts of living water as may quench the natural thirst of your souls, but come not hither constantly to draw without any comfort or assistance ; but be assured the well is not deep ; you may ever be supplied “ if you worship God in spirit “ and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such “ to worship him.” May we all then, who call ourselves Christians, find such relief as the institution of the Gospel is calculated and was intended to administer ; and may the great God grant some of us a better, and all of us a right understanding in all things.

SERMON

S E R M O N VI.

JOB, CHAP. V. VER. 17.

“ Behold, happy is the Man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty.”

IT is a very unjust and unwarrantable measure, and betrays but little knowledge of God or charity to men, which the world generally adopt, forming their opinions of others by the evil they suffer, or the good they enjoy. Such persons do not consider that this life is not a place of reward but of trial; and therefore whenever they see wickedness flourish, and virtue under distress, they are immediately tempted either to “charge God foolishly,” by encouraging what they think him bound in justice to suppress, or else, because they see sin and misery
generally

generally go together, to suspect the fault where they observe the punishment, and to conclude that a man must needs be guilty, because he is miserable. Thus poor afflicted Job, by all his argument could never persuade his friends of his integrity, till God himself appeared in the vindication of his servant, and by the most distinguishing marks of a most extraordinary favour convinced the world that he did not deserve it.

Though these words of Eliphaz the Temanite, may seem proper to have given this holy man some comfort under his misfortunes and afflictions, yet, like his other comforters, they were designed to add to their weight, by intimating that he had done something to deserve them, and that he was happy that by them God intended to reclaim him. These friends of his were like the Barbarians, who seeing a viper fasten on the hand of St. Paul, thought they had sufficient reason to say among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live." Even our blessed Saviour himself, he who "knew no sin, in whose hands was no violence, in whose mouth was no
"deceit,"

"deceit," even he on this very account was "numbered amongst the transgressors;" and because "he bore their griefs and carried their sorrows," unjustly charged with their iniquities too: They fools (the Jews I mean who crucified him) ignorantly imagined his "coming down from the cross" the surest test of his being the Son of God, whereas God himself has made the "taking it up" the distinguishing character of his children: He has so ordered it that in this "the sons of God" should be manifest," even by the marks they wear of his fatherly discipline; and that hereby all men should know that we are "the brethren of Christ" by being made the partakers of his sufferings.

Thus do the afflictions of the holy Jesus teach us at once both the necessity and comfort of our own. He was perfectly innocent, yet it pleased the Lord "to smite him and put him to grief," teaching us hereby that the very best of men have no security from the worst of fortunes. He was the only begotten son of his Father, the son of his love; and therefore God, in not sparing him, assures us, that we are never the less objects of his favour for being those of his correction; that
his

his chastisements carry not the strokes of an enemy, but of a kind father and a friend ; and that 'tis " those whom the Lord loveth " that he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son " whom he receiveth." The ways of Providence are past finding out, because " the " Lord seeth not as Man seeth ; whilst Man " looketh on the outward appearance, the " Lord looketh on the heart."

God Almighty then often interposes a seasonable affliction to prevent our falling into some deadly sin, and to obviate the fatal consequences that would have attended our commission of it. God knows that the very best of us are every moment of our lives exposed to invisible dangers, and either through ignorance or inadvertency incurring sins and inconveniencies we are little aware of: And what can be more expressive of his fatherly love than when he sees us " greedily running " after the error of Balaam," and like that blind prophet rushing on to a guilty ruin, kindly to stop us in our journey, and by a threatening messenger before our face to direct our going in the way? Thus did Abimelech's distemper prove his remedy, whom, as he was about to commit adultery with Sarah,

Sarah, Abraham's wife, mistaking her for his sister, God withheld from his sin, and mercifully prevented the crime by sending the punishment due to his intentions. Whoever will pay but a small attention to the manner of God's dealing out afflictions to the sons of men, may easily discover the instructive benefit they design us ; that it is not his desire to " grieve, but as his beloved sons to " warn us." He first begins with mild and gentle medicines, tender, as it were, to hurt the patient whom he undertakes to preserve : And when either the approach or return of our distemper forces him upon sharper methods, the severest remedy is still the last, and the unwilling part of his dispensations. Ten times did he charge the Egyptian tyrant to " let his people go ;" ten times did the stubborn King refuse to let them go : The Prophet's rod had commission not to punish but to instruct ; to convince by miracles before it offered to reduce by judgments. The lightning still shone before the thunder, to flash instruction on the guilty people ; to teach them the danger before they felt the blow. The judgments themselves likewise were gradual : The death of beasts preceded

that of men, and the Red Sea itself was turned into, blood to warn and threaten those it was afterwards intended to destroy. Unhappy Prince! who suffered so many things; but unhappier still in suffering them in vain! Oh! stubborn and relentless heart, so often and so deeply wounded, yet never melted by the Prophet's wand! That powerful wand which "turned the hard rock into a standing water, and the flint stone into a springing well."

But God Almighty afflicts man not only to prevent his fall, but also to work his recovery. A continued run of uninterrupted prosperity is too dangerous a blessing for God to venture, or for man to manage: It is apt both to multiply our faults and falsely conceal them from us: It is continually furnishing us with one temptation or other to commit sins, but allows us neither time to consider, nor humility enough to correct them. Nay, what is strange, too free an enjoyment of God's blessings tempts us to forget the author: It plunges us into a fatal over-fondness of the world, into a way of senseless living, like men who "have here a continuing city, and never look for one
" to

“to come.” In this dead sleep of carnal security does an easy fortune (like another Dalilah) treacherously engage us; a dead sleep indeed! Deaf to the whispers of the Holy Spirit, not to be shaken off but by the loud alarm of the “Philistines rushing in upon us.” When therefore our Heavenly Father sees fit to let them loose, is it to gratify any fullen humour of his own, any ill-natured delight he takes in grieving or afflicting the children of men? Or doth it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, he doth it; to chide home our wandering desires; to take off our attention from the present world, and to fix them upon a better; to check our pride; to make us know ourselves to be but men; and to give us the leisure of a cool reflection and serious repentance: Not for his own pleasure, but for our profit he doth it; that we may be made thereby partakers of his holiness. God sees that too great a load of worldly happiness is apt to hurt and oppress our growth, and therefore he wisely prunes us by affliction: He grafts, as it were, new life in the wound, and by lopping off our superfluities, renders us the more abundantly fruitful. So just a value had holy David for

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the sharp but wholesome prescriptions of his great physician; so well did he understand both the design and improvement of them, that we find him always as thankful to his God for them, as for any even the most palatable dispensations of his providence: “ Before I was afflicted, says he, I went astray, “ but now have I kept thy word.” God finds it oftentimes morally impracticable to make the same thing serve at once both our pleasure and our health. Our waters, like those of Bethesda, must sometimes be first troubled before they can heal us. Manasses lost his liberty in a palace, and recovered it in a dungeon: Nebuchadnezzar again learned to deserve a throne by leaving it, and found it more instructive to graze with beasts than to govern men. Affliction brought back the prodigal son to his father and himself, and taught him that obedience, by the things which he suffered, which he could never learn by those which he had enjoyed. Behold ! thus happy is the man whom God correcteth ; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty ; for he maketh sore and bindeth up ; he woundeth and his hands make whole.

God

God Almighty makes use of afflictions not only to prevent the fall, and work the recovery, but also to employ the virtues and distinguish the graces of those he loves. Were we indeed, like the land of Egypt, fruitful without the assistance of clouds and tempests to make us so; did we, like that happy climate, need no other influence but that of fair weather and clear sky to improve our growth, God would not find it necessary, as he often does, sometimes to overcast our pleasures, thereby to render our graces the more conspicuous: But, alas! the brightness of our virtue is too often sullied by prosperity; it is half lost in a calm, and finds its business and its glory in the storms of affliction. We become indeed, in some measure, good and holy in doing God's will, but, like the Captain of our Salvation, we are made perfect by suffering it. When God upbraided Satan with an extraordinary character of his servant, telling him, that "there was none like him in all the earth," the Devil, we find, appeared but little surpris'd at it. He immediately answered the Lord, "Does Job serve God for nought?" He thought he had sufficiently disparaged the good man's inter-

grity by imputing it to his prosperity ; he urged it as no such signal merit for Job to serve an indulgent master, “ so plentifully “ blessing the works of his hands, and making “ as it were an hedge about him, and about “ his house, and all that he had on every “ side.” But when Satan had prevailed with God “ to put forth his hand and touch all “ that he had,” and yet saw the holy man continue, not to curse, but bless him to his face ; when he saw that neither sword nor fire, nor the most exquisite torments Hell could inflict upon him, or man endure, were able to extort one guilty thought, one unbecoming expression from him, we find him no longer employed in disputing but shaking his integrity, and forced at last, by a shameful defeat, to proclaim his conqueror such as God had before described him, “ a perfect “ and an upright man, one that feareth God “ and escheweth evil.” Indeed what a glorious spectacle that ! How pleasing to God and instructive to men, to see a good Christian bravely struggling with opposition and difficulties ; to see faith triumph over sense, and the strength of his grace over the weakness of his nature ! To see him, as it were, wrestling

ling with his God, and resolved, like holy Jacob, "not to let him go till he dismiss him with a blessing." To such a virtue as this God sees an inactive rest would be totally injurious, would rust and conceal the brightness which action and exercise distinguish and improve; and therefore, like a wise commander, he draws out the choicest of his men, and places them in the front and heat of the battle, in the post of danger, but of honour and reward; which none but the great though good, and the brave, are worthy to maintain. Here did the glorious company of the Apostles, here the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, here the noble army of Martyrs, triumphantly maintain the great and glorious fight of Faith, and with shouts of victory expire. All the honour they desired from their labour in the Gospel was that of being accounted worthy by its author to suffer the shame and death that attended it: "Thus did it behove Christ himself to suffer, and so to enter into his glory." "Beloved think it not therefore strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you;" a fire designed by God not to consume but to

to brighten and refine us; where the good man shines and improves, instead of suffering under the trial. So much reason have we to account them happy who endure; and when we rightly consider the end of the Lord in afflicting us, to confess him, even in the severest of his dispensations, "very pitiful and "of tender mercy," and thankfully to kiss the rod which aims at nothing but our benefit, and "by its loving correction to make "us great."

Since then the great advantage which God designs, and we should make of the afflictions which befall us, is the amendment of our lives, "that he who suffers in the flesh may "cease from sin:" Whenever we feel ourselves under his fatherly correction, let us seriously examine our past behaviour, and discover, if we can, the nature of the offence by that of the punishment. Indeed, the one is for the most part so natural a consequent, and sometimes so lively pointed out in the other, that it is almost impossible for us to mistake in the discovery. Our misfortunes point so directly to the sins that deserved them, that we stand confounded at our guilt, and like Joseph's brethren convinced, "that
"therefore

“ therefore this distress is come upon us.” Are we, for instance, afflicted with the loss of our health, our reputation, or our estate? Let us consider ; perhaps we have impaired our health by intemperance : It may be, we have vainly abused the good name we enjoyed, to a fond opinion of ourselves, and a contempt of others : It is more than probable that our estate has been raised by injustice, or increased by covetousness, or wasted by luxury. Do we complain of oppression or hard usage from others ? It is much to be feared that we have too often practised it ourselves : And so in all other cases it is no hard matter to trace back the things wherein we have formerly offended by those which we at present suffer. And our great duty in them all is, humbly to acknowledge both the righteousness and mercy of our God, “ who for “ our sins is most justly displeased ;” sincerely to confess the heinousness, and implore the forgiveness of them, and by an hearty repentance for the past, and amendment for the future, to appease our incensed Father, and turn away his wrathful indignation.

This, this is the only remedy we can successfully apply, both to assuage the violence
and

and shorten the continuance of our troubles. As for all the other arts, which foolish men too often practise, either to elude or evade their afflictions, "they are all physicians of no value; miserable comforters are they all." But alas! whither will the misguided madness of men transport them, when they fly from God for succour and support? How often do we see them blindly throw themselves into the Devil's hands, and from him expect deliverance and relief? So foolish are they and ignorant, as idly to hope to escape evil by committing it, and preposterously to abate the severity of their troubles by multiplying the occasions of them. And here I cannot forbear observing with pity the folly of those who make their afflictions the excuse for their intemperance, and (to use their own expression) drink to drown their sorrow; who lay themselves under water to keep off the troublesome approaches of an enemy, which under God they need little care for. But alas! however the short relief of good company and intemperance may for a while serve to divert the invasion, it can never pretend wholly to parry it off; but as soon as the poor man awakens into
his

his senses, and grows cool again, the charm goes off, and leaves him more naked and exposed to the rude assaults of the still more outrageous enemy. No: It is repentance alone that can strike at the root of our miseries, and dry up the fatal springs that feed and nourish them: Our afflictions must learn of us to be innocent, and when once they have sucked out all the venom they were sent to draw, they have then no more to do; like leeches they drop off of themselves, quite spent and dead, not allowed to hurt where they can no longer cure.

When we have fairly done our part towards the removal of our afflictions, we have then “patiently to tarry the Lord’s leisure; our soul must wait still upon God till he choose to vouchsafe us his salvation.” Indolently to despise the chastening of the Lord, or unmanfully to faint when we are rebuked of him, is the highest affront we can offer to his great Majesty: It is to call his wisdom and goodness into question, and to tell him to his face, that either he does not understand, or will not consult the true interest of his creatures: It is to suspect his very power; it argues him greatly unworthy of our confidence, and far
from

from being what he loves to call himself in Scripture, "the Defender of all them that put their trust in him." And even when it should please Almighty God, for reasons which we cannot comprehend, to plague us with all his storms, with afflictions of a larger size, such as are not common to men ; though all this should come upon us, yet neither must we behave ourselves frowardly and contumaciously under his discipline, nor shamefully sorrow, like men that have no hope ; like men who know not God, who never heard of the sufferings of Christ and his Apostles, or the glory that crowned them. No ; we must express a patience worthy of a Christian, being spurred on by example, and encouraged by the most glorious rewards : We must imitate the holy Psalmist, who under the severest pressures "was dumb and opened not his mouth ;" never, but in praise and thanksgiving to his God for giving him warning ; never but in acknowledging the righteousness of his judgments and the benefit of his correction, knowing that "of very faith he had caused him to be troubled ;" like him we should patiently abide always, and praise him more and more. If then with an
humble

humble confidence and unwearied faith we wait for the Lord "till the wind and the "earthquake be overpast," we shall then find him at last in "the small still voice," speaking peace and comfort to our souls, in a blessed support under all our afflictions whatever, and an happy issue out of them: But above all, we shall feel him in those eternal and glorious rewards of another happier state, which he has faithfully promised, and will assuredly give to those "who, looking up to "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, "shall run with patience the race that is set "before them."

in the confidence and uncertainty of the
world but the Lord "all the world and the
flesh are to be overcome," we shall then find
him as he is in the flesh and voice. "He
has been and comes to our hearts as a
plotted messenger of all our afflictions and
sorrow and he says the world is mine. But
above all we find him in the midst of
our afflictions and in the midst of our
sorrow he has faithfully followed and will
surely give us his "who looking up to
him we are comforted and he will
"that we may follow the steps of his
"perfect love."

S E R M O N VII.

1 SAMUEL, CHAP. III. VER. 18.

*"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth
him good."*

THUS spake Eli; and thus should every good man speak. Such a noble resignation as this should not only fill the mouth, but influence the heart of every believer, every pretender to Christianity: Such a confidence in the Deity as this, such language as the text, bespeaks the rational creature and the man. But alas! how often, even upon the slightest occasions, do we hear profligate wretches arraigning the goodness of God, and murmuring at his dispensations! How often do we find men wishing to carve for themselves, and out of their own insufficiency prescribing for their own necessities!

And

And how often, too often, when their supposed interest is attacked, do we know them to rail at the stupendous schemes of Providence, and give vent to the most horrid of blasphemies.

But how different is the behaviour of this hero of our speculation, when surrounded with every poignant calamity, nay, much severer than ordinarily befall us deluded, despairing, and ungrateful people. Eli had been appointed by divine direction to the priesthood, and vested with all the power that the ecclesiastical œconomy of the Jews could confer: Being descendants from Aaron, “who was chosen out of all the Tribes of Israel to be God’s priest, to offer upon his altar, to burn incense, and to wear an ephod before him,” he and his family by promise were entitled to retain the same honours for ever. Thus circumstanced he had nothing to fear, and nothing more to hope; every ambition of his soul was gratified, every desire fed, and nothing wanting to complete his dignity. His sons, agreeably to the promise, were placed in the same station; but to thy cost, Oh Eli! and the utter extirpation of thy power, they, unhappy sons, but more unhappy

happy father ! apostatized from their duty, fled from the loyalty of their heavenly King, and added to the years and grey hairs of their father, the insupportable misery of the Divine anger. Here every blossomed hope was blasted, and every joy sullied in its lustre ; here every gleam of tranquillity was eclipsed, and the mind of the poor old man left to the melancholy and dreary prospect of knowing his fatal doom. From a principle of paternal fondness, a fondness that has often increased the groans, and added to the number of legal executions, he connived at the iniquity of his sons, or finding them obstinate and avaricious, gave them up to a reprobate mind ; from whichever of these motives it sprung, he incurred a guilt not to be overlooked, never to be pardoned. God first of all argues with Eli upon his ingratitude, putting in mind that he had chosen his tribe and himself in preference to all the rest ; that he ought to have been duly sensible of the honour ; that he ought not to have slighted his benefactor or trifled with his office : Next he arraigns him upon his iniquity in suffering his sons to take the choicest part of the sacrifices, and apply them to their own un-

hallowed use: He charges him with profaning his offerings, in giving scope to their own luxurious palate, and pointing an insult of the worst kind at himself. As a punishment he tells him, that he would strip him of his honours, and confer it upon those who sought not to despise him; that he would totally demolish his family, speedily terminate his own existence, and not suffer any one of them to spend half their days; that he would provoke his envy and foil his peace of mind, by placing an enemy in his room; that he, who should remain at the altar, should live to the utter grief of his heart, and to be the rankling canker-worm of his soul; that none of the issues of his house should arrive to maturity, but die in the flower of their age; that his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas; should soon both in one day be made the victims of Divine fury; and add to all this, that the punishment was inevitable; that no sacrifice or offering should ever atone for the iniquity; nothing appease the Divine anger; nothing shorten the Lord's hand; but that he might consider it as certain as if it was at that moment accomplishing. A decree sufficient, one would suppose, to have petrified him

him into a statue, and driven life from its very seat ! A decree sufficient to scare the worldly-minded man into the horrors of despair, and even madness itself ! And a sentence (the supposition of which, without any reality, sickens every faculty of the soul) but which, certain in execution, must sink any of us, dastardly creatures, into a confusion inexpressible. Such would be the features of our modern depravity, such the attendants upon corruption, and such the ideas that our Free-thinkers, or, which is much the same, irreligious Christians, would conceive on the same black and dismal occasion. But on the contrary, observe the force and power of true religion ; mark the thoughts that the genuine belief of a God and Providence will always produce. Instead of reviling Providence, instead of cursing his dispensations, instead of being struck with the cowardly fear of a paltry sinner (which would be the behaviour of too many of us under these circumstances) being acquainted with his fate, with the serious composure of more than a philosopher, with a greatness of soul which can proceed only from religious principles, he says, in the words of the text, “ It is the

“ Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good.” As much as if he had said (nay, ’tis the epitome of whole volumes) the great God, who has of his own goodness created me, by his power has hitherto preserved me, and in his mercy has overlooked my many imperfections, has surely an indefeasible right to act as he pleases : All his dispensations, I know, however evil they may appear, are still good in themselves, and intended for my profit : The Almighty Disposer, who first called me to himself, and heaped his blessings upon me, has every right to thrust me from him, and withdraw his favours : The great searcher of hearts knows my depravity, and only punishes from merciful considerations : I will therefore freely give him up his own, my all ; and with humble contrition come before him.

Who can read this story, who can view this picture, without the utmost rapture of delight ; without yearning after the same disposition of soul ; and without wishing to be Eli, even under all the severity of God’s afflicting hand ? With what an humble composure does he conduct himself amidst a whole shower of distresses ? With what a sedateness of mind does he receive the dreadful message ?

Every

Every social sentiment became immediately unstrung ; every tender wish, which so naturally swells the bosom of a parent, was suppressed ; and every selfish passion lulled asleep by the soft sounds of reason, and the voice of Heaven. For a person thus to divest himself of self-preservation, that eldest law, that masterly spring of human nature ; thus to tear from his tender breast the anxious feelings of a father ; thus at once to forget that he had sons, and that those sons must soon die ; that the thread of *both* their lives should at the same mournful period be cut off, and he himself bereaved of the bosom darlings of his hopes ; this was great ; this was good, What but the fortifying spirit of his great Judge could have so manly supported his soul under the sharp harrows of such extreme affliction ? What could silence the pleading eloquence of every degree of sensibility but he who breathed into man the breath of life, and formed this clay to live and feel, to die, and be as if it had not been ? Thus to subdue every turbulent passion, which too fatally festers the human heart ; thus to extinguish every spark of resentment, which is too often engendered by a disappointment of power ;

and thus to smother every ember of malice, which ideas of rivalry are very apt to rekindle; these are such manifestations of true piety, as nothing but a due sense of religion alone could inspire. Indeed, what is man without this civilizing principle? A proud, headstrong, ungovernable brute. What is he without the influence of this refiner? Nothing but an heap of rubbish, and a bundle of corruption. What is he without this soother of the passions, this mistress of our spiritual childhood? A man without, but a beast within. But what is he, when polished by the spirit of religion? An honour to his Maker, an ornament of the creation, the being of the two worlds, and an infant-angel. If Christianity then work these great effects upon our nature, and if we do not hearken to its sacred and salutary precepts, what are many of us to conclude, but that we dishonour God, unless formality is all that is required; that we are a disgrace to the creation, unless the ornaments of the body, and the pride of state, place us in an elevated class; that we approach nearer to the lower world than betwixt both; and that instead of being angels, we are too many half-grown devils;

devils ; begotten by corruption, born of ignorance, suckled by pride, and nurtured by the hand of degeneracy. Such our pedigree ! Such the modern breed of miscreants ! And can the offspring of so infamous a stock ever presume to hope for the countenance of Heaven ? Can such a degenerate race ever expect the blessings of the Almighty ? The great God, who detests the corruption of human nature, and is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, will not suffer it : The Parent of all, who sent his Son on purpose to dispel our ignorance, and inform us better, will not allow it : The Saviour, who humbled himself even to the death of the Cross, and abhors every idea of pride, will drive us from his presence ; and the Redeemer, who by his precepts and example has concluded all under sin, and by the salutary medicine of the Gospel wished to purge our nature, will resent our provocations. Do not therefore suffer yourselves to be carried away by such mistaken notions : Let not delusion, with its hellish smiles, win upon your hearts, and warp you from a sound judgment : Be persuaded that none can be members of the Christian Church but those who are the disciples

ples of Christ, and that none can be his disciples but such as adopt his principles and spirit. Be not deceived: Vice will often put on the mask of virtue, and with the language of hypocrisy court your attention: Sin will often assume the garb of what is called politeness, and tickle the hacknied passion; inso-much that though all vicious things are not polite, yet too many polite things are vicious. Such is the force of enslaving Custom, which receives its breath from the rotten brain of the great, and its nourishment from the aping populace; Custom, which gives charters to infidels, and franks the character of the Deist; which teaches that religion is a bugbear, and its professors impostors; which says, "What is God that we should depend upon him, or the Almighty that we should fear him?" This is fashion; this the leading principle of our very refined age, in which the sound dictates of old-fashioned common sense are frittered into the nothingness of affectation, vanity, and singular nonsense. No wonder that this gross perversion of things should obtain, since the young people of these times, of either sex, are so erroneously educated and falsely instructed. The
male

male part, before they can properly read their mother tongue, have ascertained the laws and customs of their own country, or have formed any settled notions of religion, are indulged with the *name* of taking a foreign tour; whilst the females, instead of cultivating those useful virtues which would adorn that state for which they are early candidates, and for which God and Nature have designed them, are taught to consider Dress as their Idol, Novels as their Bibles, and Cards as their Prayer-books.

To conclude with some observations deducible from the sacred text:

As this nation, like Eli's family, has been so remarkably and peculiarly favoured by the notice of Heaven, let us beware, lest by an abuse of his indulgences we incur the Divine displeasure, and leave ourselves destitute of every hope, every support, and every comfort. Let those who are possessed of riches, honours, or any kind of emolument, not think them tenable independently of the will of Heaven: but let them learn from this sad example to know, that their greatness cannot protect them, their dignity cannot shield them; that an elevated station only renders them

them still more accountable, and consequently that every sin they commit carries with it a doubly malignant imputation. Let those that are blessed with children reflect upon the importance of a religious and useful education ; upon the obligation they lie under to perform this duty ; upon the great and in-expiable guilt they incur by a neglect of it ; and let them, from poor Eli's example, be roused to suppress every infant vice in their bosom, and to season their tender minds with ideas of God, religion, and goodness. Let those whose self-sufficiency suggests to them false schemes of interest, who, without consulting the Deity, regard only their own supposed wants, who murmur at the seasons if their wishes be not accomplished, and at the weather if every inclination be not feasted ; let them remember that the very worst things we suffer are too good for us ; that we are unworthy even the anger of God ; and that it is by his mercy alone that we have been allowed hitherto to live : And let us all, every one of us, reflect, that though no particular decree of death has been revealed against us, yet our provocations every day are so heinous, our offences so great, and our rebellion

lion so obstinate, that we every moment deserve to be cut off, and doomed to eternal death. And who knows (who but God alone? Upon his mercy let us rely) but before the morrow's sun the strongest frame now breathing, though perhaps careless of the event, may be prostrate under the heavy hand of death, under an intolerable load of sins, without being allowed time to say, "It is the Lord ; let him do what seemeth him good."

SERMON

"Lord, let him do what seemeth him good."
 out being allowed time to fly. "It is the
 death under an inviolable bond of law, with-
 out be prostrate under the heavy hand of
 ing, though perhaps careless of the event,
 memory, but the strongest and most breath-
 Upon his mercy for us rely till before the
 death. And who knows who built our stones
 leave to be cut off and destined to eternal
 lion to obliterate that we every moment be-

S E R M O N VIII.

PSALM XLIV. VER. 24.

*Wherefore bidest thou thy face, and forgettest
our misery and trouble?*

THIS is the favourite language of the world, not of those only, who seldom give themselves the trouble of thinking whether there be a God or not, but even of those who are better disposed, who have exhibited some traits of the fear of God, but whose religion being built upon a sandy foundation cannot sustain the weight of adversity, cannot bear the test, the grand test of virtue.

But shall poor simple dust and ashes argue thus with itself? Shall such an helpless, impotent, feeble creature as man, thus arraign the goodness of God? Shall we set ourselves up as judges of our own deserts? Shall we pretend

pretend, presume, or have the impudence to attempt to carve for ourselves, when a single finger is not at our own command? God forbid. But let us deal so freely with our important selves as to ask the following questions. Do we imagine it possible for us to have produced ourselves into being? No; for then we must have acted before we existed. Must we not then acknowledge that our existence was derived from some superior Power? If so, what Power so capable of creating us, as He who has continually preserved us? For our preservation, to which we are daily and hourly witness, is with us a more feeling argument of that Power, than our first creation. Can we suppose then that *chance, fate, fortune, hap*, or any such apologies for our ignorance of things, but which we often find in the mouths of men, could have effected such stupendous scenes as are continually presented to our view? What are all these words, but terms used to cloak the shallowness of our insight and the weakness of our understandings? These, though vulgarly adopted, are not to be esteemed the causes of the most minute event, or to claim the least shadow of administration: No; there is only one cause both
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of great and small effects, only one dispenser of mighty achievements, as well as trifling actions, and that is God: That God, who existed from all eternity, and to all eternity will be the same; who, after the revolt of presumptuously aspiring Angels, created man to supply their place, and to be the objects of his goodness in their stead; and who, being infinitely and essentially true, uniformly steadfast to his purpose, and retaining an invariable regard for his produce, never ceases to support us under all difficulties and trials, in all afflictions and distresses, and under every calamity which corruption every where disseminates. He is in all cases and respects perfectly holy, and therefore cannot but hate and detest every thing that is impure or unholy: All his actions, dispensations, and works of Providence, are entirely correspondent with the purity of his essence. Every thing then that we suffer, or may appear to be undeservedly inflicted upon us, proceeds from his justice, dictated by his wisdom, and executed according to his invariable goodness. His justice must be satisfied, though his mercy pleads our exemption: His wisdom pervades all nature, sees every operative cause, views every

every consequential effect, and causes every thing to redound to our spiritual welfare. And shall we, presumptuous we, say, why hast thou done thus? Shall we remonstrate with God, when his goodness, too extensive for our deserts, still continues to us our existence and our all? When, though immersed in scenes of perplexity, we still enjoy privileges superior to our merit? And when, being sinners, we may think it a great mercy, that we are permitted even to live?

A single reflection upon the Author of all the blessings we enjoy, that it is the same, who deprives us of their sweets, who first of all conferred them upon us; a single thought, I say, upon the just dispensations of Providence and the indefeasible right he has of disposing favours as he pleases, nay of crushing us in a single moment, should teach us to act with submissive acquiescence and due resignation to the Divine Will. After all our foolish bustle, what can we do for ourselves? It is evident to every one, who gives himself time and leave to think or reflect at all, that man, unassisted and left to the tendency of his own nature, is very frail, very weak, and swiftly hastens to his dissolution; that his breath is
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in his nostrils one moment, and may be recalled, irreparably demanded in the next; and that his body is continually subject to pain, obnoxious to evils every minute of his life, and liable to dangers which may soon, alas! perhaps *too* soon level him with his mother dust: That his mind is vague and volatile; that his understanding is shallow and defective; his will crooked and perverse; and his passions, strong and obstinate, can admit of no dispute: And that in consequence of this constitutional weakness, he is strangely blinded by the thick mists of error, grossly deluded by the phantoms of imagination, and insufficient, totally unable even to move a single joint, or form a single thought for himself, without a superior and heavenly influence, is what every day too fatally teaches us to experience. To depend solely upon himself then is trifling with his security; and yet do not we often see that weakness and extreme imbecillity have the assurance to confront Omnipotence? Do not we see that ignorance, and the darkest of all ignorance, strive to stand in competition with Omniscience? Ought that then, which abstractedly considered, is so vile in it's conduct, in it's nature, and in it's end,

to fly in the face of him, from whom he receives every lustre, every acquisition, and every virtue? No; it must not, it cannot be. Let us learn and humbly endeavour to know our own insignificancy, to scan our own emptiness, and be convinced, that, as we are this day by God's creating hand to bare something, so to-morrow we may, without the same sustaining hand, degenerate into our original nothing.

But, if we extend our views beyond ourselves, examine the complection of mankind in general, and discover the principles upon which they commonly act, we shall find them also too weak a foundation whereon to build the safe superstructure of a satisfactory confidence: Such pillars are much too rotten to bear the important weight of our happiness: They are only bruised reeds upon which we cannot lean without the danger of perforation: Friends, alas! are only the creeping, crawling insects of a summer's day, which the winter of adversity nips and destroys: They are only idols of imagination, only ideas in the brain, but rarely existing in the life; seldom able, but more seldom *willing* to fulfil their specious promises. "Ah! my good
"friend,"

" friend," (says the Man of the World) " I
 " conceive an inexpressible regard for you,
 " would do every thing to promote your wel-
 " fare, and should rejoice in an opportunity
 " of serving you. Can I in any instance assist
 " you? Only give me a chance of convincing
 " you of the sincerity of my friendship, and
 " you will find me inseparably yours." This is
 the smooth language of the cringing hypocrite
 so long as Fortune smiles; but, change the
 pleasing face of things, shew him the black
 frowns of that fickle, capricious goddess, where
 are then, thou miscreant, thy deceitful pro-
 testations? Where are now thy services? Vile,
 doubly-contemptible wretch, get thee behind
 me! Teach the world to beware of thee; let
 the dogs bark at thee; let all nature stand
 aghast at such villainous perfidy; and let
 every one shoot out their lips and shake their
 heads, saying, behold a sycophant and a traitor!
 " I was hungry, and he gave me no meat;
 " thirsty, and he gave me no drink; naked,
 " and he cloathed me not; but cruelly left
 " me pitiless, and exposed to the poignant
 " wounds of a morose fortune." But where
 is compassion? Where is sympathy, that hea-
 venly claim? Alas! it has scarce found a

fixed seat in the *human* breast; it "came
 "down from the Father of Lights," and thither, I fear, must return for reception and
 entertainment: It is not an offspring of the
 world, and therefore it is not surprising, if
 slighted by those who are but one remove above
 the brutes, but whom the brutes disgrace.
 Thus weak, and thus unstable is our dependence
 upon the world for the relief of our
 misfortunes; and therefore we must look up
 to an higher cause, even to him, who has
 the springs of nature in his hand, and directs
 them according to the dictates of his unerring
 wisdom. It is God, who can confute the
 wisest counsels of the most able politicians,
 and is high above all things of the earth, even
 he only can rescue and defend us, he only is
 our shield and our castle, and in him, as the
 prime cause of all things, and the steady anchor
 of all our hopes, let us rest satisfied,
 confident, and dependent. Flesh is frail,
 mankind deceitful, and we ourselves deceived;
 but God is our confidence, let us not despair;
 he is our shield, therefore we need not fear
 the poisoned arrows of the malicious world;
 and he is the parent, in whose tender bosom
 we may remain unmolested and secure. Actuated

uated by these sentiments, we may defy the hypocrisy of double-faced mortals; leaning on this staff, we may ridicule the empty blasts of ostentatious threats; and with a sense of this dependence, we may calmly gaze on the stern face of danger with a confident smile.

But is there nothing on our part necessary for the attainment of this favour, or the security of this protection? Do we imagine that the blessings of Heaven drop into our mouths without petition or intreaty? Are they so little valuable as to merit no exertion? They must be sought with earnestness, with fervency, with zeal, with ardent affection, and indefatigable perseverance; and then, not till then, though we put on the form of godliness, and through custom conform to the externals of the church, we may hope to feel a just sense of a bountiful God. It is recorded in various passages of Scripture, that God, from an invariable principle of beneficence to his servants, has frequently rescued them from their cruel persecutors: From the same examples we may trust, that the same kind and merciful Being, upon our religious deportment and steady observance of his laws, will ever "take

"us all out of the mire and clay, set us upon
 "a rock, and order our goings."

Suppose now, for instance, that any of us, being reduced to the lowest ebb of indigence, and labouring under the sharp harrows of affliction, had formerly been favoured by the acquaintance of a person, whom we might take the liberty of addressing, and who, from favours already received, we had reason to believe, would assist us with his pocket, his interest, and every other means of relief: Should we not use every method of re-establishing that friendship, of doing every thing that was pleasing to him, and avoiding the commission of every thing that was disagreeable to him? Should we not act in the most submissive and cautious manner towards him? Should we not study his temper in all points, and consult our interest by every conformity in our power? Should we not adopt every measure, every plausible step, that seemed to tend to that desired purpose? Now, God is exactly that great, that unparallelled friend, to whom we may open our bosom, and pour out our complaints, who is continually assisting us, and is disposed to give easier than we can request, and more largely than we can possibly

possibly deserve: And yet, notwithstanding these unmerited favours, and in contradiction to our own avowed principles, we still persist to fly in his face and provoke his vengeance. But, "do we serve God for nought?" No; he only desires us to be virtuous for our own sakes, to perform conditions both easy and natural, and then to be happy, supremely blest hereafter, and comfortable even in this fluctuating and visionary scene of things. But, if we do not choose to trust God's promise, nor to confide in his word, because his favours are still at a little distance, let us not wonder if we are miserable; we must not be surprized if we be disappointed of those blessings we so much pant after, nor murmur "if he hide his face, and forget our misery and trouble." Depend upon it, God will not be trifled with, will not be mocked, insulted or affronted, but will crush us with the weight of his just though revengeful hand. For, if our holy penman, the man after God's own heart, were not free from calamities, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear? Where, but in a state of trouble, disquietude, and anxiety; in a state of distress, horror, and perplexity, without alleviation, without mitigation, or
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the least lenity, till they turn away from their wicked, reprobate, and abominable practices.

Listen to these instructions then, and be wise in time.

SERMON

S E R M O N IX.

JOHN, CHAP. VIII, PART OF VER. 24.

*"For if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall
 "die in your sins."*

WHO but a Jew would not tremble at this declaration? Or who but a madman, or a Deist, would run the risk of damnation for a petty singularity of opinion? In consequence of the loss of primæval innocence by Adam, we have virtually in him incurred the penalty of eternal death: We are still obnoxious to this penalty, till it be either expiated or the transgression pardoned. Now, the sin cannot be pardoned without infringing the sacredness of God's justice, which, agreeably to his wisdom, has founded a law, to that law annexed a sanction, and expressed his will in such absolute terms, as
 fully

fully evince both his veracity and knowledge, and such as nothing but the insinuation of the Devil could ever call in question. If this will be not fulfilled then, it strongly impeaches his authority, and leaves him imperfect like ourselves; a thought that must sicken every religious man and every Christian! The sin then must be expiated (not by ourselves, alas! we too fatally know our own indignity and insufficiency, but) by one, the greatness of whose person, added to the innocence of his life, rendered him fully capable of compensating the injury done to our great Sovereign, and restoring us to his lost favour. Here then what can we do? What expedient can we concert for ourselves? Apply to the best amongst us, we shall find him labouring under the same common depravity, and unable to fill up the measure of his own obedience, much less capable of satisfying the Divine justice for millions of wretched delinquents. Supposing it possible that the sense of our situation, and the poignancy of our contrition, should prompt us to make our addresses to him for relief; alas! we are unworthy to approach the Throne of Grace, we could not hope to enjoy the least

least gleam of favour ; we have highly provoked him, and he deserted us ; our petitions would be rejected, and our impudence rebuked.

In this state we were left by our unhappy first parents, exposed to the fury of an Almighty Deity, hopeless as to redemption, but hourly, nay, every moment expecting to suffer our condign punishment. Reflect upon this and tremble : Consider, Oh my soul ! how fearful a thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God : Consider that thou wast once dear in his sight, and capable of the most consummate happiness ; but now the execrable object of detestation, the subject of misery and horror, and possessed of sensibility, privileged with immortality, only to increase the acuteness of thy pangs, and to add to thy extreme misery the insupportable dread of knowing that it will never cease : But, hark ! Thus surrounded by this dark and dismal scene, stung by the furies of an agonizing conscience, and ready to be consigned to the caverns of despair, I hear the Trumpet of Peace proclaiming the welcome tidings of the heavenly Gospel, declaring the mercy of a Redeemer, and acquainting us with what
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we could never have hoped for, and Christ alone could procure, a reprieve from our dismal sentence; a blessing that ought to rouse every noble faculty of human nature, should awaken every worthy sentiment of the soul, and teach us with the voice of gratitude to celebrate the praise of our Creator, and the love of our Redeemer.

To this glorious manifestation of Divine goodness give all the Prophets witness: This unparalleled display of love is abundantly confirmed by the beneficence of the miracles which he wrought; and his divine authority was at the time of his passion confessed, even by some of his enemies; in short, the joint force of evidence to a considerate mind is so irresistible, that nothing but prejudice, or the vilest of inveterate malice, could oppose such glaring conviction. Our Saviour, knowing the depravity of the hearts of the Jews, in order to work upon their fears, and if impenitent to leave them without excuse, tells them plainly, that "if they believe not him they should die in their sins;" that if they did not give credit to his testimony, doctrines, and commission, notwithstanding all their expiatory sacrifices,
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which were only typical of himself; notwithstanding all their privileges of distinction, in which, "at sundry times and in divers manners," God had evidently displayed his predilection, they should still be excluded from the favour of God; should be exposed to the natural tendency of their rebellious inclinations; and should find that all their blossomed hopes would be blasted by the breath of God's displeasure.

The same reasons that are urged upon the Jews for their belief, may with equal propriety be enforced upon our consideration: What he says to them was said also to us: The same punishment which they are exposed to, includes also our destiny: The same miseries which they incurred will be hurled down upon our heads: And though we are now a powerful, opulent, and almost invincible people, yet, by a prostitution of our religion, and other kindred enormities, we may with equal justice, like them, become a desolate, deserted, abandoned, and odious people. They, as well as we, were once the peculiar objects of Heaven's favour, and distinctly noticed as God's chosen people; but because they rejected the saving truths of revealed religion,
and

and obstinately rebelled against the Lord of Life, they were reduced to their present detested state. Take heed then, and beware that the same "evil heart of unbelief" does not involve us in the same misery; nay, worse than theirs, because apostacy, after a due reception of the Gospel, carries with it much worse effects than an absolute refusal of it. We do believe, we say; but how do we believe? Not so as to influence our lives, and save ourselves from eternal death, but rather to condemn ourselves, and darken the present gloomy scene of horror. This then is the dilemma, this the fatal option; either we must use common sense, believe, and be preserved from destruction; or else we must shake hands with our intellects, shut our eyes against the light, and with them too late opened, be plunged into torture permanent and inexorable. There is no medium; no alternative; the one or the other must be our decisive lot: There are no works of supererogation to increase the balance of our scanty weight; there is no purgatory; no place after death, in which we can wipe away the filth of our pollutions: Nothing, alas!

Nothing

Nothing but a "fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation to destroy us."

Let none of us then imagine, because we are born in a Christian country, sprung from Christian parents, and have assumed a Christian name, that we shall by virtue of these be saved, or that these alone will plead any thing in our favour: No; these are the smallest parts, the most trifling privileges of our profession; these are only the accidental, not the essential properties of our religion; these are only forms to strengthen the fundamentals of our salvation: It is Faith alone, evidenced by a suitable conduct, and a process of repentance, that can redeem us from the curse entailed upon our nature. There are too many, I fear, but for want of consideration, I hope, who vainly suppose that if they go to Church, receive the Sacrament, kneel upon their knees, (though without devotion) and make the responses (though without the least fervency); that if they borrow the appearance of religion, and deceive mankind without regarding God, who dives into the intention of the human heart; and without the heart will accept of no sacrifice; that if they can thus speciously acquit themselves,

themselves in the opinion of the world, and acquire the tinsel reputation of piety and godliness, they have performed the whole of their duty, and discharged the whole requisites of Christianity. A gross mistake this! A most horrible delusion! A mistake that they may too late be convinced of; and a delusion which, like an *ignis fatuus*, may decoy the wandering wretch into the abyss of inextricable misery.

Was our dispensation, like the Mosaical, chiefly external, and chequered with a variety of ceremonies, a conduct of this nature might be more plausible, and carry with it a kind of reward; but since God, under this perfection of religion, "requires truth in the inward parts," to attend barely to the forms of religion, knowing that the mind is the seat of Christianity, is an insult of the blackest dye offered to its author. Far be it from me without foundation to censure any assembly; but my own observation has furnished me with too many instances of this complexion: And as we, the Clergy, "are put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth the heart." If the bare outward acts of worship

affections, by "keeping the whole law" sincerely though not sinlessly, by grounding our faith upon gratitude to our great Benefactor, and withall by reflecting that "the ways of "man are continually before the eyes of the "Lord," and that he ponders all his goings, scans every action, weighs every motive, knows every intention, and will most assuredly punish every base, every hypocritical design. If we exert our utmost cunning we cannot deceive him: Whilst we are indulging, indeed exposing ourselves in any irreverent or indecent action during divine service, he narrowly observes our shameful neglect, and records it all in the volume of his omniscience, to appear against us at the last day. Such a lazy pretension to obedience is not the result of a true faith; it may be polite, but it is not a Christian's practice; it might suit an Heathen, who acts under no obligation but what is natural, and who has never heard of Christianity; but more is expected from us, and a deficiency will be severely punished. It would mightily shock our pride to give us the appellation of Heathens; to say that we are no Christians; but it is no fierce presumption to affirm, that many of
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us are no better than Pagans, nay, worse than those, when, contrary to our better knowledge, we dare allow ourselves in such practices as the Heathen with half the information would blush to commit.

To conclude:—We have all sinned in Adam, and may all be redeemed by Christ; We have all rebelled against God in the one, and may all be reconciled to him in the other: We are all lost in perdition by a disobedient parent, and restored to bliss by a pure and innocent Saviour. But how restored? Not by him, unless we perform the conditions. How often do we pronounce the words *Creator* and *Redeemer*, and never once think of the benefits we receive from those benefactors? How often in our prayers (not prayers in all) we call upon them to exert their mercy and their love, and yet the words pass, like an arrow through the air, and leave not a single trace behind? Suppose now (in order to bring the doctrine home to our feelings) we had any of us procured a friend, whose good wishes we were well persuaded of, and who had frequently done us very capital services: Suppose, by any misconduct of ours, we had forfeited his friendship, and incurred

his displeasure: Suppose still farther, that any person, from compassion for our loss, should intercede for us, and remove the enmity betwixt us; should we not thank that friend? Should we not serve him to the utmost of our power? Should we not comply with any conditions which he proposed to us? I may venture to answer, and vouch the general compliance: Now if secular concerns gain so great an ascendant, why not spiritual affairs; why not matters of the utmost consequence to ourselves, and without which we must die? Not die as we do on earth, but die to live in hell torments. Have we faith? Let us have it towards God. Have we confidence? Let it appear in a consciousness of doing well. Have we pride? Let it be only that of setting an example of piety, virtue, and godliness. Have we charity? Let it first be exerted in favour of our own souls, after that in general benevolence to all mankind. Without these virtues, justly founded and properly applied, whatever we may call ourselves, whatever we may think, we fall far short of the mark of redemption, and with our eyes open are left to "grope in the dark, and stumble in the noon-day." The light of the glorious

rious Gospel of Christ is hidden from our sight, and though it darts, like a two-edged sword, into the darkest corner of the soul, yet being past feeling to every the softest impulse of the spirit, we quench its motions, and are dead to every effort of recovery. "Awake then thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee life."

know, Gospel of John is written from out-
 light, and though it states that it was written
 to the world, and the darkness of the world
 and being in darkness, the light in-
 coming of the light, the darkness of the world
 and the light to every man of the world.
 As the light from the darkness, and the
 light of the world, and the light of the world.

S E R M O N X.

ST. JOHN, CHAP. XIII. VER. 34, 35.

*“ A new Commandment I give unto you, that
 “ ye love one another ; as I have loved you,
 “ that ye also love one another.”*

*“ By this shall all men know that ye are my
 “ Disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

HOW a new commandment ? not new in nature, only in degree and measure. This principle, though not expressly inculcated to us by any other system, nor possible to be recommended to us under such endearing circumstances, has nevertheless always found a seat in the human breast. If we examine our nature, and abstract it from that vein of corruption, which pollutes the stream of amity and concord, we shall find it originally

nally vested with social affections calculated to promote and procure the happiness of each other. That solitude and perpetual retirement from the world, unless springing from the causes of disappointment, shame, or any such like principle, is a state, to which almost all are averse, will be granted by observation and experience: That a secret pleasure and an inexpressible consciousness of joy attend the performance of a beneficent action, is obvious, though not to all, yet to many generous people in the world: That we estimate the merit of a public action by the disinterestedness of its nature, is an axiom well-known to the reflecting part of mankind: And that we call that person noble, brave, great, and good, who sacrifices self to the prosperity of the community is equally true; but a truth, alas! too seldom cherished, and too seldom confirmed, though happily and significantly exemplified in this our nation: Though mankind are very apt, nay rarely fail, to shew a tender partiality to the brats of their own degeneracy; and to nurse them in the soothing cradle of self-love and conceit, yet whenever we hear of a mean, narrow, contracted action, or discover the least traces of ill-nature

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or malignity in a person, we immediately and uniformly pass our verdict on that action, and call it *inhuman*, or condemn that person, and call him *illiberal*: On the contrary, if a man of a more expanded turn of soul presents himself to our consideration, one who soars above the groveling sentiments of an earthworm, and whose disposition carries with it the air of general beneficence, how largely do we applaud him, how suddenly does our conscience claim an acquaintance with him, bids us open our bosom, and receive him as its guest? This is the language of conscience, this the very idiom of nature. Besides, even society itself, which is a state of compact (and to the virtue of which many falsely ascribe the cultivation of these very principles) when first formed, has always considered this as innate, and built itself upon that supposition. For without an inclination there would be no consent, without consent no combination, and without combination no society: So then, society is constituted not to create this principle, but to protect, secure, and enlarge it.

The supreme Creator of the world, in the wonderful scheme of his Providence, has so happily

happily blended the selfish and social appetites as to render the one subservient to the other ; that by consulting our own wants, wishes, and exigencies, and at the same time considering that we were not born for ourselves alone, we might be led to step out of ourselves, and lend an hand to the indigent and unhappy. While we enjoyed our primitive innocence, and were assisted by the supernatural aid of smiling Heaven ; when our Reason were fortified by the Divine Arm against the force of temptation, and our passions chained down by the fetters of subserviency ; then Nature bore the face of regularity and order, no rebellion, no war in the members, nothing was seen but unanimity, peace, unity, and love: But, alas ! after our revolt, when our passions gained strength from the weakness of our reason, and the whole tribe of vicious appetites in the dread revolution assumed the empire of the man, then farewell harmony, farewell all blessing, adieu my peace ! Then was nothing seen but rapine, oppression, violence, and injustice ; nothing heard but the voice of discord, the language of party-rage, and the sound of confusion ; nor any thing conceived but fraud
and

and speculation, the foulest murders, and the most calumnious reproaches. Thus the bright face of Heaven was obscured by the black smog of hell; the silent whispers of the Deity stunted by the hoarse murmurs of the devil; and man, created to converse with God and Angels, and to enjoy the peace of heavenly intercourse, was doomed to the tumultuous parley of demons, and concerting the destruction of himself: A most deplorable perversion of things! A shocking change of nature! Such the completion of the old world, and happy would it be for us, did it not still even now continue old, did the newness of the commandment issuing from so great an authority, work a renovation in our natures, and utterly destroy the corrupted old man. This command then does not appear to be new in nature and design, only in use and measure; vicious custom having so obliterated the lines of duty, as to render it with some even a question whether it ever was such. But if the dispensations of God, primordially written and engraven upon our hearts, be the dictates that claim our attention; if his beneficence justly demand our imitation; if his paternal tenderness call forth our affection; and his
daily

daily blessings do not shamefully escape our notice, it is such a duty as the Heathens themselves acknowledged, such a duty as our Saviour himself recommended by his example, and by his precepts commanded us to observe; and that, not by contenting ourselves with barely abstaining from injuries, not by resting satisfied with a negative regard for our fellow-creatures, and not by living as idle and useless members of the community, but by loving our brethren as Christ has loved us.

But here how can we express a due sense of his favours? How can we sufficiently admire the ardency of his love? He, who was God himself, and happy in the bosom of his Father, to quit that happiness, to throw aside the splendor of his godhead, for us insignificant wretches: For him who was a perfect stranger to all miseries, to submit himself to each and every one of these, for our ease and tranquility: For him, to expose himself to the anger of his Father, for the sake of us, who had nothing to hope, and every thing to fear: For him to submit to the scorn, the insults, and contradiction of men, when by a single thought he might have destroyed both their bodies and souls in hell: For him to
assume

assume all the feelings of human nature, and with the quickest sensibility to undergo the severest agonies of soul: And for him, who might have availed himself of the privileges of immortality, and bade defiance to the Prince of Terrors, to lay open his bosom to the horrors of death, and present his bare breast to the pointed sword of justice, to dispel the gloomy storm of wrath which lowered over our heads by the rays of redemption, to spill his blood, his dear, righteous blood, for the sake of our worthless dust and ashes, to conceive the pungent stings of sorrow in his soul, and feel the sharp tortures of punishment, our punishment, in his body; to bleed, to groan, to die, and all for us rebels, us traitors, the vilest of sinners, and most enormous of reprobates, whose flesh is scarce worthy the fowls of the air, or the beasts of the field, whose disobedience nothing can palliate, whose wickedness is of the blackest dye, and who ought at once to have been hurled down to perdition, eternal, scorching, and inexorable: This, and not less than this, was the Divine Love.

Our Saviour was God, and yet stooped to converse with men, but particularly the poor:

But

But we, on the contrary, though men, with an insolence unpardonable, refuse to stoop to an inferior, or to think him of the same species. Our Saviour was perpetually employed in doing good both to the souls and bodies of men, whilst we, on the contrary, (too many of us at least) call it ill-bred to converse with the poor, and with hardened severity put on the rugged brow of avarice. Our Saviour always breathed the spirit of benevolence, and with the hand of tenderness upheld even his enemies; but we are perpetually fomenting animosities amongst ourselves, forming divisions, conceiving the most malevolent resentments, and giving birth to the most disrespectful words; in short, acting more like enemies than members of the same community, subjects of the same King, servants of the same Lord, united in the same Baptism, adopted under the same faith, and heirs all of the same promise. How then can we turn so deaf an ear to the tender intreaties of so kind a benefactor? How can we, with any face of modesty, dare oppose the commands of so affectionate a Lord? In duty we should blush for ourselves: In point of gratitude be ashamed of our conduct: And with a view
to

to interest rouse ourselves out of this lethargic state, and court Heaven and its rewards. We are commanded by the text to love one another : We are assured, by the reverse of the text, that without this we cannot be Christ's disciples : And we well know, that if we are not his disciples, we are lost and undone for ever. Now, as our Saviour himself said, " Not every one that saith unto me, " Lord, Lord," that is who makes a nominal and oral confession of faith, " shall enter into " the kingdom," and enjoy the promised happiness ; so now all are not Christians who are of the Christian Church.

We must not only follow him, but we must imitate his example ; must obey his precepts ; must love his righteous commands : Like him must love our enemies, must pray for them, must do them every consistent service ; must cherish a principle of good will for all mankind ; must assist them in distresses, comfort the broken-hearted, be careful of their persons, just as to their goods, and tender of the reputation of all. As God is merciful, kindly overlooks many of our failings, cheerfully pours down his blessings upon us, measures our deserts more by pity than rigid justice,

justice, and has compassion for all, so we should remember, in imitation of him, to pass a mild construction upon the faults of others, knowing that our own sins (did we justly discern them) are very crying; our transgressions numerous, and our rebellion, which God views with an eye of mercy, in the scale of justice would be heavy and unpardonable. As Christ, the blessed Redeemer, stooped to indignities of the basest kind, held the arm of vengeance by the force of compassion, and prayed for his very executioners; so we, for the sake of our brethren, should spare no trouble, grudge no labour, to serve them: Not seek for handles of offence, or study to find out occasions for disgust; but always recollect, that "if God be extreme to mark what we all daily do amiss, who could abide his fury." And therefore say, "Oh Lord! correct me not in thine anger; be not extreme to mark my misdoings, lest thou bring me to nothing."

If mutual love then be made the touchstone of Christianity, if our Saviour, who makes this the criterion of our profession, carry any authority with him, how few are there that are Christians? How few deserve that honourable

honourable title ? And how many (too many alas !) will find themselves grossly mistaken at the great day of accounts, when, being judged entirely by this rule, they can produce nothing to extenuate their fault, nothing to alleviate their crimes, but this lame and paltry plea : Alas ! *I did not think !* But where are the Scriptures ? Thrown aside perhaps, like rubbish, into some remote and dusty corner, seldom thought of, and more seldom disturbed : Search them, and there you will find the sanctions of eternity uttering terrible accents ; there you will know what you are to fear and what to hope ; and if the callous soul be not stirred by these, little less than Hell torments will too late make a lasting impression.

But how agreeable is this very command to the boasted refinement of human nature ? How pleasing to perceive nothing bitter or fretful in our mind ? Nothing but the most sedate complacency in our composition ? Nothing turbulent to overwhelm our tranquillity, nothing malignant to sour our peace, no alloy to adulterate our pleasure ! This is a foretaste of Heaven ; and without these principles, or some kindred qualities, it would

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be no Heaven at all. Hell is the place or state for all churlish, revengeful, and envious spirits; and thither must they go, to feed their uneasy souls with morsels of stinging misery; misery, which begets itself more furious, and leaves behind it a progeny more hellish than itself. Fly then this misery: Seek after those things which make for your peace: "Let love be without dissimulation:" Let every generous avenue to the soul be expanded to the reception of every sentiment of humanity: Be pitiful, be courteous, be kind one to another: Put away from you all hypocrisy and guile: And let every one of us remember, and every morning before we go into the world, as well as every evening when we retire from it, gratefully recollect, "that
 " Christ, from his exceeding love, was sacri-
 " ficed for us."

SERMON

S E R M O N XI.

ST. MATTHEW, CHAP. XVIII. VER. 35.

*“ So likewise shall my Heavenly Father do also
 “ unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive
 “ not every one his Brother their trespasses.”*

THE moral difference betwixt the Mosaic and Christian dispensations consisted not so much in the nature of the precepts, and in their extent and latitude: The Jewish law was calculated for the meridian of the Jewish nation. Our Saviour, in his excellent sermon on the Mount, adduces many instances, in which precepts were established, and practices connived at, merely on account of the hardness of their hearts. Amongst the rest he quotes the law of retaliation, which obtained amongst the Jews, and mellows it down to the soft and tender principles of his own laws.

laws. As well as restrain all acts of revenge in that passage, in this of the parable, of which the text is the conclusion, he forcibly and feelingly inculcates the duty of doing as we would be, and are frequently, done by.

The story is told in the usual Gospel simplicity. The tenant owed his landlord a large sum of money, more than he was able to pay, and for which he was about to suffer imprisonment. He pleads his poverty, and willingness to pay, which struck the landlord with so much compassion, that he frankly forgave the debt. Hideous monster ! No sooner was he liberated from the perils that threatened him, and scarce had tasted the benefit he so lately received, but insensible to his former situation, to the happiness of his enlargement, deaf to the pleading dictates of gratitude, and the intreaties of his fellow-servant, he inhumanly exercised that judgment upon him, which had but just before been remitted to himself. The candlestick of the Gospel having been so long fixed amongst us, and enlightened our understandings, let us hope that our hearts likewise are so humanized as to produce but few cases of the like complection.

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This monstrous, this more than Barbarian conduct, seems to chill the warm blood, and stagnate its motion. It is astonishing we can so soon forget the benefits we receive from our superiors, as the next moment to deny them to those that are dependent upon us. It is unnatural so to act: Our innate feelings forbid and condemn it: The love of virtue is naturally inherent in the human breast, and approved even by wicked men. This villain's fellow-servants, who at other times and in other cases might have joined their hand with him, might (as is the too common case of servants in this day) have connived at acts of injustice towards their master, nay, have assisted in pillaging and plundering his property; in robbing his barn, and many ways purloining; wounded with compunction, overcome by the joint force of all the circumstances of the act, themselves became his accusers, sorry to reflect that there could be so much baseness covered by the human form.

The erect posture of Man seems to be intended to elevate our minds above such base actions as even the beasts themselves would blush (could they blush) to commit towards those of the same herd. Nature has given

us an upright face, and commanded us to look up to Heaven; and, good God! There to behold thy starry firmament, the greater light to bless the day, and the lesser light to gladden the night; to reflect upon our wonderful creation, and thy more watchful preservation; to meditate upon the numberless sins which by thought, word, and deed, we daily commit against thy divine Majesty; sins sufficient in strict justice to call down vengeance, both temporal and eternal upon us; but which, in the great mercy of redemption, thou enablest us to wash away by the precious blood of thy suffering Son; to ponder all this goodness should humble the pride of our revenge, blunt the edge of our cruelty, and soften us into an imitation of that kindness which we cannot but see, and never sufficiently admire. But God's tenderness is infinite, his acts of mercy are not limited by numbers; he every day, without our requesting it, forgives us our offences, gladly hears the sinner's plaintive supplication,—“Have patience with me and I will pay thee all,” and with willing tenderness stays the vindictive hand. How often then shall our brother sin against us, and we forgive him? Till seven times

times? Our Saviour's bowels abhorred the scanty number, and extended the act to *seventy times seven*. The same compassion, the same love for mankind, which led him as a lamb to the slaughter, and poured out his soul unto death, displayed itself in his answer to Peter: He felt what he spake, and confirmed it upon the Cross.

How can we reflect upon that amazing instance of tenderness and pardon, without blushing at every principle which looks like persecution and hardness of heart. Surely our brother has a stronger claim upon our benevolence than mankind altogether could possibly plead for the benefit of his sufferings. The difference between us and him is incomparably great; and had he not shortened that infinite distance, by stooping to take upon him our nature, we could not dare to have hoped for such great humility: But our brother stands upon a level with us, enjoys the same rights of creation and redemption, all subject to the same obligations, nor can any the best of us plead any thing of superiority but what Providence has vested us with: Should not "we then have compassion upon our fellow-creatures," even as he our

Creator

"Creator and Lord has had, and still has pity
 "upon us."

Should the Almighty, as in justice he might, demand a *perfect* obedience to his laws; should he in default deliver us "to the tormentors," that is, should he give us up to the violence of those evils which our folly deserves; to the misery of those dangers which our infirmities threaten; and to the weight of that punishment which the provocation of our sins justly draws upon us; in short, "should he be extreme to mark what we daily do amiss against him," how poignantly might we dread all those calamities which by his mercy we so happily escape! How insufficient would all our efforts be "to pay what was due unto him," to appease his wrath, to atone for our delinquencies, and to recover his lost favour? Where should we seek the balm that would relieve the afflicted soul? Where would the hungry find their bread, the thirsty their water, or the naked a garment? Where would the wounded spirit, which none are able to bear, find an atonement to plead for him, or an holy spirit to comfort him? Or how could we look up with our present boldness to the Throne
 of

of Grace, when the mercy seat is covered with a cloud of wrath ; no still small voice to solace, only lightnings and thunderings to terrify us.

This picture, however tragical the attitude may appear, we may, God knows, find the likeness of in our respective situations: Various descriptions of life are strongly marked by some of its features. To cheer this gloomy face of sorrow and distress, our Saviour tells us, that we must be so duly impressed with a sense of God's pardoning grace, as to look with a tender eye, with an humane heart, upon the trespasses of others. We have every reason from Scripture to believe, that the "same measure that we mete to others," will either in this life, or the next, or both, be "measured to us again;" all the violent strokes of malice, all the hard speeches of malignity, will be retorted upon us. How necessary is it then, that, whilst we have opportunity, and it be day, we cultivate that sweetness, that meekness of temper, which will make even our enemies be at peace with us, which will act so forcibly upon their iron-hearts, as to melt them down into profusions of kindness? We should endeavour to suppress
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the hissings of that fiery flying serpent which depravity has hatched within us, and cherish and imitate the cooing tenderness of the harmless dove; not suffer the risings of an impetuous, turbulent spirit to lead us captive at its will, but by the gentlest offices of charity discountenance that evil one, who has ever been the concertor of all mischief, and the author of all strife: Let the same act join hearts as well as hands, and the God of Love will send his blessing upon us.

I cannot but advert here to that idle, fallacious distinction, which obtains in the world, and by which, I fear, men too often delude themselves more than they imagine: "*I will forgive, but shall never forget.*" There is so slender a partition between these two different acts of the mind, that whilst we think we are within the boundary of the one, we may possibly verge too closely upon the confines of the other. Prudence, 'tis true, directs us to avail ourselves of our daily experience, and in general we ought not perhaps, in a world of offences like this, to forget the case in the abstract; but we should be very careful how we apply the smallest idea to the person of the individual whom we *pretend* to forgive:

forgive: *Pretend*, I say ; because, so long as we figure to our minds the person that injured us, whilst we reflect upon the case, we cannot avoid entertaining a little kind of grudge, which will greatly weaken, and that radically, the God-like virtue of forgiveness: It will contract that expansion of soul, which alone is the parent of a liberality of sentiment ; it will lay an embargo upon that generosity of conduct, that sincerity of speech, that openness of countenance, that candour of deportment, all which united, so signally mark an heart divested of prejudice and resentment. Indeed we most of us too well know, that when once prejudice has taken possession of the human heart, it shuts the door against conviction, and fortifies the mind against all those arguments which the unbiassed man would intuitively embrace. We should therefore strictly examine our reins and our hearts, not suffer ourselves to be deceived by a notion which is oftener ideal than well grounded ; but in our souls, clearly purged from the filth of every dirty passion, each forgive his brother their trespasses.

The true cultivation of this principle is of such consequence to the peace, order, and happiness

happinefs of the community, that without it the laws of the land lend but feeble aid to prevent and restrain perfonal injuries. Religion is the ftrongeft bulwark to any nation, and the beft fecurity to the legiflature. The moft religious man, from inward conviction, without the fear of the penal fanktions of the law, will always prove the moft peaceable fubject. He will feel himfelf accountable to an higher than an earthly power, for his moral as well as civil conduct, and from motives of gratitude and dependance, of the firft and moft cardinal nature, will learn to love the goodnefs that allures, as well as fear the power that commands him. He will further reflekt, that as his ftay here at longeft is but very fhort, when the rod of earthly power fhall ceafe to brandifh its terror, then he will be a candidate for that blefled ftate whence rancour and malignity, wrath and clamour, are banifhed, and love, unity, and benevolence, will eternally dwell; that his enjoyment of that ftate rife or falls in proportion to the good or evil habits he has acquired here; and that at all events, whilft he fojourns in this tabernacle of the flefh, he will more effectually avoid thofe bitters which
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poison his own happiness, more truly consult the comfort of his dependents, and whilst he thus strives to love God, will most certainly demonstrate, as an example to others, that he loves his brother also.—That these two duties, thus naturally united, we may not only never put asunder, but may all strive, with one heart and one soul, ever to preserve conjoined,

I pray God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

giving his own happiness, more truly confirms
the content of his happiness, and will be
the first to love God, will most certainly
be contented as an example to others, that
he loves his brother also. These two
things, thus naturally united, we may not
only never get separated, but may all thrive
without hindrance and one love given to preserve

concord.
I pray God, through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

S E R M O N XII.

PSALM CXXX. VER. 3.

*“ If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what
 “ is done amiss ; O Lord, who may abide it ? ”*

GOD at first created Man to be immortal, and made him to be the image of his own eternity : He breathed into him the breath of life, gave him an understanding large and capacious, a will inclinable to the supreme good, affections submitted to the dictates of reason, and a nature under no propensity to transgress. “ He crowned him with glory
 “ and honour, and though he made him a
 “ little lower than the angels, yet he gave
 “ him dominion over the work of his hands,
 “ and put all things under his feet.” In this capacity, and whilst he maintained his rank amongst other intelligent beings, he was in a proper

proper condition to converse with God, and live under his immediate dominion. Thus circumstanced they enjoyed the comforts of a well regulated conscience, and were every day visited by the light of God's countenance: No perturbations to molest their peace; no gnawing anxieties to prey upon their vitals; but the incessant encomiums of a well governed heart, the pleasing prospect of a delightful habitation, and every circumstance, as supported by God's daily presence, exhibiting the strongest reasons for joy and supreme comfort. But when by their own folly, as well as the Devil's envy, "sin entered into the world, and death by sin," a strange catastrophe then ensued: Their understandings grew dark, their reason weak, their affections wild, and their passions impetuous: Thus corrupted, thus depraved, God, who cannot look on iniquity, cast them away as deformed and loathsome objects, and could not endure them in his sight. Driven from his animating presence, they were instantly overpowered by a sense of shame, the agonies of guilt, the dread of Divine wrath, and the terrible apprehension of a punishment which they knew not how to avert.

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This transgression is called *original sin*, which does not consist in the infusion of any positive malignity, but in the subduction of the divine graces: By this means we are left to the tendency of a rebellious nature, "every imagination of our hearts being only evil continually," and every affection of the soul moving in a direction contrary to God and goodness. From this depraved principle flow spontaneously all those transgressions of the Divine will, which we personally commit either in thought, word, or deed; and which are characterised by the name of *actual sins*. Various are the kinds of these, which, as directed by different states of the understanding or the will, fix upon us different degrees of moral imputation, and render us more or less guilty before God. When our understanding be defective, 'tis a *sin of ignorance*; when our passions be unruly and predominant, and hurry us on to the perpetration of any wicked act, it is a *sin of infirmity*: When our understanding be sufficiently informed, and our wills not so violently borne down by, as leaning to, the impulse of passion, we then incur the *sin of presumption*: If we allow ourselves, notwithstanding

all the suggestions of conscience, the soft whispers of the Spirit, and those helps and assistances we have at command, to repeat these transgressions, we then grow into habitual sinners, under, perhaps, the most aggravating circumstances.

We see, from this short survey of moral nature, how much we are exposed on every side ! Our original sin, like a bottom-wound, an incurable sore, perpetually fills us with disorders, and preys upon our vitals : And our actual sins, sins of commission and omission, all with united force beset us so easily, and withall so closely, that we cannot live a single day without sin. The miscarriages to which the very best of us are continually liable, force us to cry out for mercy ; and without that mercy, what would become of us ? Thy justice, if exerted, O Lord, must instantly crush us into our original nothingness. Now, though all these sins which I have enumerated do not carry with them an equal degree or kind of guilt, yet as the necessary result of our primitive disobedience, they must be displeasing to God, and expose us to the decreed punishment. Sins of ignorance, for instance, seem to carry an excuse
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in their own nature ; and we are apt to think it severe to suffer for such things as we did not know ; yet since God created Man in his own image, endued him with a soul capable of apprehending divine truths, and had secured him from a mistake of the understanding ; since we lost those supernatural powers by the disobedience of our first parents, and the curse of that disobedience is entailed upon us their posterity, we are therefore involved in the same guilt, as springing from the same stock of rebellion and corruption. And with respect to the actions themselves, if they be performed through *invincible* ignorance, or such ignorance as could not be overcome by the strength and application of the powers we possess, God, who requires no impossibilities from Man, will look with an eye of lenity upon these ; but if by availing ourselves of the benefit of the persons, times, and places, which are set apart for our instruction, we might have informed ourselves better, and so have avoided the commission of them, we can no longer recur to the plea of ignorance, a plea which the lower class, I fear, too much shelter themselves under ; but we must fall under the imputa-

tion of *intentional* sinners ; because, purposely to do what is forbidden, and carelessly to neglect what is enjoined, is exactly the same kind of sin.

The same is to be observed touching the *sins of infirmity*. We are all too apt to look with a partial glance upon these, and with a darling tenderness to plead an apology in their favour. There are few libertines, I suppose, when conscience sounds the alarm, but try to soothe their blistered minds with the poisonous balsam of false argument. They palliate the sting of their offences by some such reasoning as this : “ I find myself possessed of such and such affections ; I find “ objects in nature correspondent to such “ affections ; God never acts in vain, therefore it is no sin thus or thus to act.” This argument seems somewhat specious, and with a man stung by the smart of a wounded spirit may serve as a cooling salve to the venomous rankling of his wounds ; yet conscience, dissatisfied with this weak armour, mutinies in his breast, and calls for a more stable defence. But in answer to this, let it be recollected, that those affections which the natural man finds implanted in his constitution,
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are the fruits of degeneracy, the inmates of a fallen nature, inordinate; and therefore the order and correspondency which at first subsisted is now lost, destroyed, and gone: To argue therefore upon this principle is establishing the unlawfulness, instead of the lawfulness, of the action, and more strongly rivetting the dominion of sin. In a state of innocency indeed to act upon such terms was acting right, because the passions then had no propensity to disturb the poize of Nature; but since this balance has been counterpoised by the weight of vicious impulses, since the moral fitness which was first impressed of things has vanished, and we are apt to desire what we ought not to possess, and know not how to choose aright; since this perversion to indulge passion is to commit sin.

Sins of presumption and habitual sins bring no advocate along with them to plead their wretched cause. These carry the black mark in their forehead, and cannot but be distinguished by the frowns of the Great Judge. Those I have before enlarged upon may meet with mercy; but these latter ones, unrepented of, no blood of atonement can wash away. What shall we say then? If thus surrounded

by sins, what shall we do? I answer by Scripture, "If God be for us who can be against us?" From the very moment that our first parents fell, the redemption of our Saviour took place; so that those sins which proceeded merely from their transgression, if we be sorry for them, and believe in a Saviour, are at once forgiven: And indeed our actual sins, upon the terms of the Gospel, will also be done away; but without fulfilling those terms, that is absolutely impossible; neither can we in reason expect it: We cannot hope for the favours of men without some endeavours to merit their esteem; much less can we flatter ourselves in the least claim to salvation, without laying hold of the meek and lovely Jesus. We cannot be real Christians by chance; it is not custom that can really entitle us to such inestimable blessings. Though we call ourselves Christians, we may be as far distant from the distinctive privileges of that name as Heathens themselves. It is the heart only that speaks the language of Christianity; without this we are still in a state of nature, every moment meriting eternal death, the threatened wages both of original and actual sin. Indeed, the longer we
 refuse

refuse to accept the mercy of redemption, which alone can virtually wash away the guilt of the first transgression, the more does it's weight bear down upon our souls; and if so, our personal sins must proportionably receive a greater malignity, and violently press us down into the regions of darkness. If we slight this greatest of all blessings, this utmost display of Divine favour, how can we look up to God for smaller mercies; when he has laid himself so low as to die for us, and that in vain, what have we not to fear? We may surely expect that he will be extreme to mark what we daily do amiss; that he will consider us as reprobate, incorrigible, and irreclaimable; then who can abide that displeasure? If by his pleasure we eternally live, by his displeasure we must eternally die: If by redemption we are saved, by turning a deaf ear to such a gracious offer we must be lost;—lost for ever! What a distracting thought is here? And yet that thought must sometimes occur to the most wicked mind; but alas! too often upon a death bed, when I fear it is too late; too late see their sins, and too late cry unto God.

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A common mistake, I fear, prevails amongst the major part of the world, that "the mercy of God is all-sufficient for sinners." I grant it is; but not for such as still continue in their sins upon that presumption, and never bind on their sandals, or set one foot forward out of the prison of sin. Justice is as much an attribute of God as mercy: And is it fondly and foolishly to be imagined that he, for the sake of slothful sinners, will deny his nature, and suffer his laws to be trampled upon with impunity? No; this is a gross delusion: Those that love and obey our Saviour, who alone can, and for all true penitents has, satisfied this justice; those that strive to be like him, and follow his steps, they may justly depend upon the mercy of God; but those who shew no mercy to their own souls, nor yet a bleeding Saviour, but care not if they crucify him every day afresh, these will have no mercy shewn them. What is mercy? It is a conditional reprieve from the original sentence. This is conveyed to us through the blood of Christ: All other mercies flow from the same pure fountain. So that he, and he only, is the medium through which the rays of this blessed sunshine reach the world,

world, and revigorate the souls of men: He is the conveyer of all mercy, and why? For the only reason that can be assigned, because he has satisfied the Divine justice. Receive him then instantly, and unite him to your hearts, that ye die not in all your sins. They must still be red as scarlet, till this fuller's soap has passed upon them: Nothing can purify our nature but this refiner's fire. That it may constantly blaze in our hearts, and inflame our souls with true goodness, I pray God, &c.

SERMON

and, with respect to the Lord's name: His
 name is the name of all mercy, and what for
 the consolation that can be gained, because
 he has finished the suffering of his people.
 And this is the name which we have to call
 upon, that we be not in all our sins. They
 would not be the same as the Lord's
 name, but they are the same: suffering and
 death, and not us, but that is the name. Then
 we can call upon him in our hearts, and
 call upon our Lord with the words of the
 Lord's name.

S E R M O N XIII.

GENESIS, CHAP. XLII. VER. 21.

*“ And they said one to another, we are verily
 “ guilty concerning our brother, in that we
 “ saw the anguish of his soul when he besought
 “ us, and we would not bear: Therefore is
 “ this distress come upon us.”*

THERE is no sin, be it ever so small, that a man commits, but in the morning of his years he would shudder to think of, even to mention. So nicely poised is our moral sense in the soul's œconomy, that upon the least impulse it strikes, sounds an alarm, and throws the man into a posture of defence: Like the sensitive plant, it shrinks at the lightest touch, and naturally flies from danger. This is an happy state; but the misfortune is, this tenderness, this extreme sensibility,

fibility, keeps pace but with a very few years: Such a companion, such a troublesome associate, is soon left behind. The entailed corruption of human nature discovers itself in our very early years; and not long after, the ill examples we daily meet with in the world, gilt with deception, catch us, and apply themselves to our passions. Our constitutions, no doubt, claim a great share in the choice of our particular vice, and as they respectively lead us, we choose a distinct path of evil. Being thus set out on the journey of life, without any guide to direct us, we are too apt to be drawn aside out of the road of innocence and virtue, to pursue some flowery by-path, so to wander to the brink of some precipice, where happily we make a stand and look about us, or else insensibly drop into the mire, and finally sink without the power of a return.

All this while conscience, poor deserted conscience, left far behind, unwilling, ashamed to attend us, still beckons, still calls at a mighty distance; but the voice of the charmer can no longer be heard, and our eyes are blinded that we do not know him. No; we have met with new acquaintance: Avarice promises a large abundance of riches; ambition

throws

throws the kingdoms of the world at our feet; or lust inflames our blood with the genial desire of amorous solaces. The very best of them have not been exempt from the fatal influence of such snares. David, for instance, the "man after God's own heart," is a glaring example of the force of concupiscence, and of those sins which one leading vice naturally draws after it. Bathsheba was defiled; and, to conceal the shame of adultery, now budding in her pregnancy, her husband Uriah, "made drunk," and ordered home to his house, but he refused: Still to indulge the violence of his passion, and unrivalled to possess her charms, the poor man, by David's command, was placed "in the fore-front of the hottest battle," on purpose to be slain; he fell! A complication of adultery and murder! Again, the history of Joseph, which now addresses itself to our attention, furnishes us with a picture, in which envy makes the capital figure. Joseph was the favourite of his father, the son of his old age: Moreover, God had been pleased to reveal to him in dreams that superiority which he should acquire over his brethren. The interpretation of these dreams, added to their former pre-
judices,

judices, so increased their hatred, that they were determined, if possible, to defeat these prophecies, and from invidious motives conspired against him. In spite of humanity, religion, every social, tender feeling that should unite brethren, they first purposed to murder him; being by Reuben's intercession diverted from so flagitious an intention, they "put him down into a pit" to starve him; and last of all, sold him to the Ishmaelites, who brought him down to Egypt. Atrocious acts of cruelty and murder have fatally prevailed, from the death of Abel down to this age; but the steam of a brother's blood mixes with our kindred breath, and forces itself into our own bowels. The cries, the tears, the intreaties, the anguish of a brother, must work upon a mind that is not very far gone in the ways of wickedness. But here! Oh cruel and relentless brethren! They brought home the bloody coat; they imposed upon their father; they had no apprehension of being detected; they had accomplished their purpose; and the still small voice of conscience they lulled asleep by the apparent improbability of a discovery.

This is too true a picture of mankind in general: They set their thoughts adrift, never
check

check or controul them in their favourite pursuit, and "sin, as it were, with a cart-
 "rope." The delusive pleasures of life allure them; custom, that tyrant, stamps upon vice the amiable image of virtue; that, which should be better, and will afterwards prove so, seems sweet to them; and they find nothing to impede their career: 'Tis all jollity, all mirth, all prosperity; "they build their
 "chambers by unrighteousness," they stand: "They join house to house, and field to field," with lordly, sometimes oppressive, strides: "They come in no misfortune like other"
 better "folk, neither are they plagued like
 "other men; their eyes swell with fatness,
 "and they do even what they lust:" They neglect their God, oppress man, and impose a cheat upon themselves. "But God shall
 "suddenly shoot at them with a swift arrow:"
 Sickness, for instance, invades the man, and nauseates all his joys: The murrain shall grievously rage among his cattle, insomuch that his pastures shall stink with their dead carcases: He shall be bereaved of his children, nay, his *darling* child: Losses of all descriptions shall lay close siege to his property: Then comes on "the anguish of a wounded
 "spirit:"

"spirit:" He "cries unto the Lord in his
 "distress:" He traces back the crime from
 the punishment, finds himself a grievous of-
 fender in many cases, most likely can charge
 himself with one enormity amidst the multi-
 tude, and is then late, very late, perhaps too
 late, convinced, that therefore "this distress
 "is come upon him."

It is pleasant to reflect how the wicked
 actions of men are often found instrumental
 and contributory to the works of Providence.
 This act, this villainous act of Joseph's bre-
 thren, proved under God the means of preser-
 ving the chosen family from the distress of
 famine: "God had sent him before them to
 "preserve life, to save their lives by a great
 "deliverance." The man, whom they had
 treated with so much cruelty, "the anguish
 "of whose soul, when he besought them,
 "they would not hear," that very man they
 were compelled to bow down to for the bread
 of their life; an instructive lesson to mankind
 to be careful how they offer unkindness,
 cruelty, or offence, to the meanest of our fel-
 low-creatures, lest, in the fluctuation of hu-
 man affairs, the same God who can "put
 "us down should lift him up," and render

us dependent upon his bounty. They thought it very severe in charging them with being "spies of the country:" They were grieved at seeing "Simeon bound before their eyes:" They thought it very oppressive to be confined "in ward three days:" When they could no longer stand out, but were forced to yield to the evils they suffered, then steps in conscience, rouses itself like a lion, and thunders this reply: "We are very guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear:" Now we suffer a punishment similar to that crime: All his persuasions, assurances, and protestations, could not prevail with us: The mercy they had denied to their brother was now refused to them: They knew not but their brother then suffered famine, imprisonment, slavery, the very evils they themselves then feared: They had banished him from his native home, and the comforts of his father's presence, they themselves now saw no prospect ever of returning thither: In short, the similarity of events extorted from them a confession attended with all the horrors of remorse, the agonies of guilt, and the convulsive strokes

of a just vengeance, then rushing down upon them. It was necessary they should be reduced to a sense of their vile conduct, before they received the benefit which Providence produced from it: It was necessary they should mourn, and weep, and lament, and be sorry for their wickedness, before they experienced the mercy that was couched under it: It was necessary they should lie a long time under the weight of their penance, before they tasted that deliverance, which was pre-ordained and wrought for them. But, what a confusion must cover their face, when Joseph discovered himself to them? How abashed and confounded to see their brother, whom after other indignities offered, they sold into Egypt, now their protector? How wounded with angry shame to hear their very brother Joseph, forgiving their offence, mildly construing their cruelty, speaking comfortably to them, and saying, "Now be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for it was not you that sent me hither, but God." A reproof, very different from those rancorous invectives which the children of Belial in these days are too apt to utter; but a reproof enough to melt

melt them into floods of penitential sorrow, to throw them with self-condemnation on their faces to the earth, wishing to blot out the remembrance of themselves from under Heaven.

Of this sort are God's dealings towards the children of men. Numerous are the sins we all every day commit; heinous are the provocations we are continually guilty of; and grievous the affronts we offer to the Majesty of God: It is incredible what wickedness we heedlessly run into through the heat of youthful blood, and the violence of our passions: These subsided, and the rambling impulse partly taught to think, in the very noon-tide of our age we very well know what little deceits, knavish artifices, and collusive devices, we are keenly hatching, either from principle, or with a view to match the selfish world. All this is done for the space of perhaps our first forty or fifty important years, either to pimp to our lust or gratify our avarice. During this course, most probably, not a single spark of religion has fired our breast: Morality practised no further than either to acquire a reputation, or to escape the halter, and keep barely within the verge of the law: No place of worship attended, but as a lounge

to kill an heavy hour: No minister regarded farther than as tythes may bind them; in short, serving only themselves on the week-days, and the devil, by jaunting, travelling, and frolicking, on the Sunday. Doubtless "there is a God that judgeth the earth," and with forbearance and long-suffering looks down from Heaven upon such men: He first tries lenient measures to bring them to themselves: He suffers them perhaps to run the round of pleasure, gaiety, and riot, to see (as it often happens) whether what they first called the sweets of life will not pall upon the sense. If the devil has so far led them captive as to chain them down in his service, he then perhaps plagues them with a severe sickness, a putrid fever, or some other dangerous disorder, and brings them near to death's door; he tries them in the furnace of adversity, and lays upon them the rod of affliction, on purpose to turn us from the error of our ways; "as his beloved sons he warms us:" In the midst of judgment he thinketh upon mercy; he pities our failings; he grieves us only to correct us; he woos us to be reconciled to him; he sometimes keeps longer at a distance, that we may set a juster value upon

upon his love: But upon our sincere return, our hearty repentance, and the deepest humiliation, he kindly receives us into the compassionate arms of his mercy, sustains us with corn and wine, and oil, places us in the best of the land, "the land of Goshen," the land of safety, of security from those plagues which others suffered, from the hail, and the thunder, and the darkness which afflicted the reprobate, and moreover (which is the greatest of all blessings) grants us the comforts of his grace, and the blessed influence of his holy spirit.

Who then would offend so kind a father, or who would not be sorry for having acted ungratefully to his loving-kindness? He, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being;" he, on whom we depend for every good we enjoy; he, who "knows our necessities before we ask," and supplies us before we request them, was he to withdraw his sustaining hand only one moment, what would become of us? If "he should be extreme to mark what we do amiss, who, "good Lord, could abide it?" But there is mercy with thee, therefore shalt thou be feared: Mercy indeed! Astonishing goodness! Thus to spare us, when we deserve

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punishment,

punishment, to forbear to consume (as he very justly might) in a moment. In imitation then of this great example, eminently exhibited in our Lord and Saviour, and in an inferior degree in Joseph, let us always be ready to pass a mild construction upon the failings of others, to overlook and forgive a few little trespasses that will unavoidably arise in our intercourse with each other ; or, if they be evils of a larger size, look upon them all as coming by the divine appointment. By these means we shall behave as men whilst we are here, and, furnished with other graces, commence saints hereafter.

S E R M O N XIV.

ISAIAH, CHAP. LIII. VER. 5, 6, 7.

5. " *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: The chastisement of our peace was upon him: And with his stripes we are healed.*"

6. " *All we like sheep have gone astray: We have turned every one to his own way: And the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*"

7. " *He was oppressed, he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter: And as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.*"

IT is needless, I presume, to recite to my Christian readers the grand event to which these remarkable prophetic expressions

sions refer, nor to shew the occasion of this solemnity. The subject of this day grounds the first and fundamental article of our most holy religion; because, by the passion of our Saviour, the price of our forfeited souls was paid to the offended Majesty of Heaven, and that grand atonement completed, which angels, principalities, and all things created, could never have procured: Without this we are all lost; and though the lamb be really and effectually slain for the true believer, yet unless the blood be visibly sprinkled upon our souls, unless the discriminating marks appear upon these habitations of the spirit, we shall not be passed over, but destroyed with those who are enveloped in the darkness of Egyptian infidelity.

With what extreme pity then must we look upon the state of those wicked, those abandoned Jews, who, contrary to every evidence of Scripture, which was read every Sabbath, and by themselves allowed; contrary to common justice, and the feelings of humanity; crucified the Lord of Life. Not satisfied with the innocence of his life and conversation, unwilling to allow that "He went about doing good;" not content with those

those marks of the Messiah which their own prophets had fixed upon him, and which alone centered in himself, but led on by prejudice and inveterate malice, they were determined to extirpate every principle which tended to sully the glory of their temporal pretensions: Their eyes were so dazzled with the ideal blaze of a glorious terrestrial kingdom, that they could not behold the humility of the meek and lowly Jesus; they could not, or would not, persuade themselves to believe that the humiliating circumstances of the Prophet's description at all applied to that Prince who was to rescue them from the dominion of the Romans, to restore their civil polity, and to live in splendour amongst them. This remarkable instance, however, furnishes us with this lesson, that when once we have suffered ourselves to be drawn aside from the line of our duty, driven by the wind and tide of vicious inclinations, we too soon split upon a rock, and make shipwreck of our souls. Let us take care then, that these errors and prejudices of others prove salutary cautions to ourselves; lest, while we allow this grand doctrine, we become worse than infidels themselves,

selves, by denying in our practices, what we confess with our mouths.

How gloomy and melancholy to a contemplative mind must be the state of those, too many in this kingdom, who seem to fortify themselves against conviction; and in order viciously to display a strength of abilities which, thus abused, the honest-hearted Christian would blush to own, argue themselves into an affected notion, that human reason, unassisted by Revelation, is of itself a sufficient guide in our road to happiness. But look at all the sects of philosophers which obtained in the more learned parts of the Heathen world, (I mean Greece and Rome) where the mere strength of nature has been carried to the highest pitch: Examine their tenets, and you will find how far short their utmost endeavours have proved even of common satisfaction. Survey their religion, and we must observe, that so far from being agreeable to their boasted reason, their superstitious customs, their ludicrous modes of devotion, became an offence even to common decency: But, on the contrary, attend to the light which the sun of righteousness has thrown upon all subjects; attend to the improvement

provement which the whole circle of arts and sciences have received, and we must confess, that though Christianity be not immediately influensive, yet such a blessing seems to attend it's propagation, that by a kind of subtlety it pervades every operation of the human mind. Infidelity then, that favourite idol of the licentious, and those who seek a shelter from their vicious conduct, must stand abashed, appalled, and without a single advocate to defend it's wretched cause.

But however injurious infidelity may appear to the true notions of religion, yet hypocrisy will be found a more dangerous enemy to it's prosperity. Infidelity publicly and avowedly disputes it's principles, and barefacedly challenges it's professors to combat ; it's arguments, though subtle and insidious, lay open to confutation : But hypocrisy inflicts a secret, deadly wound, which preys upon it's vitals, and endangers it's very existence. Such is the principle of all those who call themselves Christians, with sighs and groans, and puritanic faces, insist strongly on the merits of a Saviour, and display not one single feeling of the want of those merits ; with affected piety build their hopes of salvation

tion upon the sandy basis of Pharisaical pride, and so virtually exclude the necessity of redemption. But, believe me, the transgressions of us all are so numerous, our iniquities so crying, that we had need every moment look up to that Saviour, upon whom our chastisement continually rests. We must ever view the insufficiency of ourselves, and the all-sufficiency of him; compare his great goodness towards us with our ingratitude towards him; learn to fire ourselves with a warm sense of his great benevolence; and with the deepest humility implore him still to vouchsafe to us the continuance of that love which we so little deserve, and every day forfeit. But still this is our comfort, that a broken and contrite heart he has promised never to despise; and that though we be assailed by the storms of temptation, and too often fall victims to the force of our unhappy inclinations, yet if we preserve a prevailing sense of the love of God, and the sufferings of our Redeemer, who as on this day bled for us, we are warranted by Scripture still to hope, that with open arms and close embraces he will receive the returning prodigal, and put on him the best robe of righteousness.

“ All

“ All we, like sheep, have gone astray:” Every one pursues his darling vice with eager desires, and offers up incense to the idol of his corrupted heart. The imperfection of a sinful nature so visibly opposes our firmest resolutions, that without the support of a Saviour, we could never attempt to stand in the sight of God, we should start back at the sense of our own unworthiness, without even the thinnest veil to cover our deformity. Without his preventing and assisting grace, we should, oftener than we do, walk blindfold into the pit of destruction, and dash our weak heads against the craggy rock of perdition. But we are not to expect the continuance of these favours, without performing the conditions upon which their vouchsafement is suspended. It is not sufficient for us to speak peace to ourselves by saying “ Christ atoned for our “ sins by the sacrifice of himself;” but we must further remember that, as well as faith, repentance and obedience are made essential qualifications of a state of grace here, and of glory hereafter. This, I am sorry to remark, is a point too little attended to: Many lean on the bosom of a Saviour, like Judas, dip their hand with him in the basin, and betray him

him at last with a kiss: Many are content to believe the propositions of Christianity in their most extensive latitude; and why? because the bare assent of the mind is attended with little or no trouble, and yet, satisfied with the barren demonstration, leave the application to others. But I must here observe, that the more implicitly we assent to the doctrines of our profession, the greater must be our condemnation, if we neglect to give them life in our actions; because the mind evidently approves what our vicious inclinations will not consent to practise, and so rises up in judgment against itself by the strength of its own evidence. Even a bleeding, dying, suffering Jesus, can never save us, unless in conformity to our best knowledge we endeavour to save ourselves. It is impossible we should ever be with him in the most inferior mansion of his father's house, unless we carry along with us dispositions suitable to our station. True friendship and society consist chiefly in a similarity of temper, so that unless we strive to be like him, we never can be liked by him. We must then zealously and cordially embrace those virtues, which he exhibited as examples for our imitation: We must, like him,

him, "go about doing good," both to the bodies and souls of men; and though we cannot work miraculous cures, give sight to the blind and agility to the lame, yet, like the kind Samaritan, we may pour forth the comforts of oil and wine into the wounds of our distressed brethren, and sooth, though we cannot heal, their infirmities. In this we prove ourselves, and all men shall know us, to be his true Disciples, if we love one another; if we improve the love wherewith he loved us into acts of charity towards our brother. It was compâssion that led our Saviour to the cross, and brought the precious, spotless, unblemished lamb to the slaughter; and it is that Godlike feeling that exalts human nature above it's common standard, and establishes that source of true comfort which flows from the weeping, the bleeding heart. An humane, generous, charitable act, is always attended with that reward of self-approving virtue, which Heaven vouchsafes to man as a foretaste of that happiness, which love alone can inspire.

But we must also be humble, not look with erected, supercilious front, over the heads of our fellow-creatures, and tyrannically triumph

umph over the inferiority of others; but with
 mildness and complacency cheer the face of
 sorrow; not captiously accustom ourselves
 to keen resentments and malicious retorts,
 but reflect, that "as a sheep before her
 shearers is dumb," so our Saviour, though
 grievously insulted, "opened not his mouth."
 The provocations which he daily met with,
 especially the indignities offered him at his
 passion, would have drawn from us the most
 opprobrious, the most malevolent language,
 whilst he prayed for his very executioners:
 "Father, forgive them, for they know not
 what they do." "What glory is it then if
 when "ye suffer for your faults ye take it
 "patiently; but if when ye do well and suf-
 "fer for it, ye take it patiently, this is ac-
 "ceptable with God." It would be vanity to
 attempt to describe our Saviour's life and
 death, when all the Evangelists give such a
 succinct yet circumstantial account of it: It
 is our duty then to impress upon our minds a
 proper sense of those sins for which our Sa-
 viour died, as also of that love which pre-
 vailed upon him to be our proxy and repre-
 sentative. Let us never forget, particularly
 on this day then, to "go into his gates with
 "thanksgiving,

“ thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise,
 “ to be thankful unto him, and to speak good
 of his name ;” being well assured, as I hope
 we all are, “ that the Lord is gracious, his
 “ mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth
 “ from generation to generation.”

transferring and his last will and testament
of the blank is to him, and to his heirs
and assigns forever, as I have said.
We all are, and shall be, the heirs of the
said deceased, and shall be bound to him
from the time of his death.

Witness my hand and seal this 1st day of
January, 1831, at New York.

John J. Van Hook
John J. Van Hook
John J. Van Hook

John J. Van Hook
John J. Van Hook
John J. Van Hook

S E R M O N XV.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. IX, VER. 46.

*“ There arose a reasoning amongst them, which
“ of them should be the greatest.”*

THIS swelling principle has, in all times and ages, found it's zealous votaries: Both history and chronology, those joint handmaids of truth, furnish us with too faithful records of it's vile ascendancy: It falls in so aptly with the bent of our depraved inclinations, that no wonder that truth is thus sophisticated, and error, like a mist, fixes itself before our dazzled eyes. There are few that refuse “ to hear the voice of this “ charmer,” it charms so sweetly, and with- all so falsely, that depravity naturally courts it, if it was only because it is wrong. What was it that dissatisfied Eve, foolish woman !

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in her happy and blest situation, and prompted her to disobey the Divine command, but the desire of being wiser and greater? This spirit of ambition very early interwove itself with human nature, and like ill weeds, or any brat of vice, increased more in strength than in age. How soon it shewed itself in that atrocious and flagitious act the murder of Abel? Cain could not brook the preference which the Lord was pleased to grant to Abel's sacrifice: The same spirit of ambition which the Devil first conceived in his rebellion against God, with which he afterwards inspired Eve in the lure he threw out to her, and which he now infuses into Cain's mind, would not suffer him to rest; by this leaven threw his passions into a ferment, and so unhappily swelled him to the monstrous size of a murderer. An accurate observer of mankind, with a proper attention paid to the annals of former times, will readily conclude, that most vices originate from this love of pre-eminence.

No sooner had the waters of the Flood been checked in their impetuous career by that Almighty hand which first gave them the daring impulse; scarce had they receded
into

into their proper channels, and verdure healed the watery eyes of man ; scarce had Noah and his surviving family been blessed with that surprising increase which marked the hand of God ; not long after, however, the same affectation of superiority which had obtained in the antideluvian days, which was, no doubt, one cause of the destruction of the old world, and which still lurked in the seeds of generation, again discovered itself in the great attempt of building the Tower of Babel. " The desire of a name," as the Scripture informs us, the palpitating wish of monarchy and power caused this fever of their brain : Like madmen they carried their phrenzy even " to the top of Heaven ;" their desires were bloated by the rankest pride and ambition ; in short, as the Lord said, " they would " be restrained from nothing which they " imagined to do." How careful is God to blast such audacious designs, for this among many other reasons, that as vice is too often the companion of power, and like a snow-ball accumulates from it's hand, virtue and religion might in other states find that mild and safe retreat which the tyranny and oppression

pression of an over-swelled and debauched monarchy too seldom afford.

Even among the children of the chosen family, the sons of Jacob, where we should least suspect vice to dwell, we find envy, jealousy, and such dirty passions, swelling their breasts, and spurring them to cruelty. Joseph, being the bosom-darling of his father's old age, was hated by his brethren: They envied him the superior esteem of their father: They carried their aversion so far, that (as Sacred Writ informs us) they could not even "speak peaceably unto him:" Still more irritated by the important construction of his dreams, for which he was always remarkable, they conspired against his life, seized him in the field, and difficultly dissuaded by Reuben from dispatching him, they threw him into a pit: Not having sufficiently sated their baneful thirst, they sold him to some merchants, who again sold him into Egypt. Now, though in this case they did not contend "which should be the "greatest," yet as in effect the same, they could not bear a superior. See to what lengths of rancour and virulence do such poisonous passions unhappily drive us; so violent

violent as even to unloose the common ties of nature ; so cold as to freeze the warm blood of the tenderest affection ; and in it's consequences so dreadful as to spare not even a brother. No one can read that part of Sacred History without being touched with the subject ; and even apathy itself must feel the force of it's simple but persuasive eloquence. I could adduce numberless instances to prove the unhappy predominancy, as well as fatal tendency of this principle, was not the case of my text alone very appositely conclusive.

View the Apostles then, who were the contenders mentioned in the text, in their natural primitive stile, antecedently to their call as disciples, and we shall find them poor men, whose chief employ was fishing, who were of the lowest class, and could not form to themselves a single idea of exceeding that situation. After their call there was no prospect of worldly grandeur set before them ; their master had not " a place where to lay his head : " He told them, that his " kingdom was not of this world : " He constantly inculcated to them the lessons of poverty, self-denial, and other humble doctrines :

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They saw no pomp in his circumstances, no respect paid to them by the great ones, nor any marks of dignity and grandeur. After their election, as Apostles, their commission did not enlarge their temporal hopes; they were sent out as beggars, destitute of every thing but the most simple apparel to cover their nakedness; without any certain accommodation to sustain nature; and taught to expect no favour from the world but "mockings and cruel scourgings, moreover bonds and imprisonments:" All these unfavourable aspects attended them, (and pursued some of them even to death) through every stage of their life. From such lineaments as these, who could select features enough to resemble the hope of greatness? Who would ever suppose that these men, surrounded by so much poverty, at best very far removed from affluence, should ever "reason among themselves which of them should be the greatest?" That they should strive for a superiority, whose circumstances did not exceed the narrow circles of necessity? Notwithstanding the predictions of all the prophets, who painted our Saviour's earthly condition in colours of the coarsest hue; in spite

spite of his own declarations, that he should be "rejected by the elders and scribes," nay, even suffer under their hands; and in contradiction to his assurance, that "the servant" could not fare better than the master," yet the glittering idea of a temporal kingdom so perplexed their understanding, that "the truth was hid from them, and they perceived it not." The very same restless spirit which has overthrown so many kingdoms, involved so many families in ruin, and sown so many seeds of discord, like tares among the wheat, in all classes of mankind, started up in their otherwise tranquil breasts, fixed the rankling canker-worm there, and bred that contention which the peaceableness of the Gospel was calculated to restrain.

But how replete soever ancient history may be with examples of this sort, yet this our age can afford us every day so many specimens, that a general struggle for pre-eminence seems to be its complexion, and "who is the greatest," it's motto. I grant that in all societies there must be subordination, it is necessary for their support: Some must govern, and some obey; some must submit, that the others may not "bear the sword in vain." Neither do I patronize the levelling scheme,

scheme, which would wish to bring down
 the sceptre and title, the criterions of proper
 order, upon the common surface with the
 spade: Each component part of the vast, the
 important machine, must be vested with an
 executive power, and that power supported
 by wealth, and maintained with a respective
 dignity. But here lies the great fault, and in
 a Christian country which ought to cultivate
 and cherish peace and benevolence, a very
 crooked fault it is, that persons of the same
 class (for classes discriminate and not wealth)
 who in the established form of government
 have no ascendancy over each other, and
 therefore not subject to each others commands,
 should swell with so much conceit, hatch the
 eggs of malevolence, breed up the fiery ser-
 pents of revenge and the worst of hatred, and
 chace one another through all the tedious
 courts of litigation and iniquity: And why?
 because the turbulent spirit of Hell wishes
 to prepare them for that cursed mansion.
 Whence arise all party-rage, all those feuds
 and contentions which so much clog and re-
 tard the wheels of state? Only from a view
 each one of riding his hobby-horse (whatever
 it be) faster than the rest; either to establish
 his

his mastery in argument, to wriggle himself into favour, and so to oust the present favourite, or else by the breath of faction to blast the wholesome designs of sovereignty, and to make a wreck of the common weal, in order to be greater by the common ruin.

But we will not confine this principle to the higher regions only, the contagion spreads itself far and wide, rages as much in the humble retreat of the valley, as upon the eminence of the hill. What frequent bickerings and disputes do we hear of amongst the private families? Either some inadvertent neglect has been shewn, or one was more noticed than another, or one has taken place of another, or an undesigned expression has dropped which vanity has construed into an affront: Their false sensibility immediately takes the alarm, the flame is kindled, good neighbourhood destroyed, reservedness takes place of affability, superciliousness of courtesy, and the whole system of social duty turned upside down. Indeed we are all too fond of ourselves, calculate too much on our self-importance, and are carried away more by conceit than reality. In the name of God, what are we that we should thus baffle and

hector?

hector? Wherein are we to be accounted of? We are very poor, infirm, precarious creatures, of such wonderful frame and fearful texture, that even the puncture of the smallest fibre gives us pain, and by the most unaccountable disaster we may to-morrow cease to exist. Where is our consequence then? Only in our preparation for that uncertain period whenever it pleases God to fix it.

If we soar ever so high upon the pinion of ambition, we must at last drop into the grave; the waxen wings of our vanity must melt before the sun of real righteousness, and leave the adventurer without support: Our greatness must dwindle into a lifeless corpse and moulder into undistinguished dust. The presumptuous height of Babel can never convey us so near heaven, as the humble dwelling of innocence, self-abasement, and poverty of spirit. The way to be truly great is to humble ourselves to the lowest offices of brotherly kindness and charity: He that is least in his own eyes is great indeed: He that exalteth himself, who sets himself groundlessly above his fellow-creatures, and treats them more like brutes and beings of another species than as "bone of their bone, and flesh of their
"flesh,"

"flesh," must be abased, must be despised by those whom they despise, must feel either the scourge of Providence here, or the final punishment of an angry Judge hereafter. These points are so frequently repeated in the New Testament, that I wonder that Christians, who confess that their redemption and grace are contained therein, should not more frequently listen to and square their conduct by them. They may listen, but the seed is sown among thorns, the cares and riches of this life choke it: So it happens to them, according to the true Proverb, "the dog is returned to his vomit again, and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire."

S E R M O N XVI.

ROMANS, CHAP. V. VER. 1.

*" Therefore being justified by faith, we have
 " peace with God through our Lord Jesus
 " Christ."*

JUSTIFICATION is that free act of divine goodness whereby God accepts us as righteous, and again receives us into that covenant we had forfeited in Adam, upon a satisfaction being made to his violated justice, and upon such terms as he has been pleased to confer it. This covenant, in contradistinction to the Mosaical law, is in every respect a *covenant of grace*, an act of the divine favour, unmerited, and only resulting from the extent of his mercy: " For the law came
 " by Moses, but grace and mercy came by
 " Jesus Christ," He then is that atonement,
 through

through whose blood we may once more look up to the mercy seat, once more cry "Abba, Father," and once more "be renewed in the spirit of our minds."

Now our blessed Saviour has established Baptism as a form of admission into that covenant which he has purchased for us; and when admitted, we are said by the Apostle to be "washed, to be sanctified, to be justified in the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the spirit of our God," that is, by the same spirit which descended, like a dove, and lighted upon him at his own baptism. This then is the first justification, or the first act by which we render ourselves accepted: And if in the course of our lives we fulfil the terms we then bind ourselves under, there is no doubt but it will produce in us those habits of virtue which will complete our final justification at the day of judgment: For "baptism is not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God."

Now, when we are first admitted into that covenant, we oblige ourselves to conform to stipulations both natural and necessary, viz. that we should believe in that God who has remitted

remitted to us much punishment, and in that Saviour "by whose stripes we are healed;" that we should transform ourselves, as near as possible to his image, and imitate his example; and that we should endeavour to obey those precepts which he has set before us in his Gospel. The first of these is the root and spring of all the rest, and therefore the Scriptures build our salvation upon justification by faith only, well-attesting that our repentance without faith is only as the morning dew, and our obedience, without a sense of the atonement, impossible. Faith in it's first sense signifies an assent of the mind to all the truths of revealed religion: This no one can be mad enough to believe will bring a man to heaven, otherwise the devils themselves, who are said to "believe and tremble," would not be in hell. In another sense it is set in opposition to the works of the Mosaical law, as in this Epistle to the Romans, where in the 4th chapter, by the example of Abraham, St. Paul shews that justification by faith was antecedent to the promulgation of the law, and therefore superseded the continual necessity of it. And in another, the most extensive sense (and in which sense it ought

always to be understood) it comprehends metonymically, the efficient for the effects, the whole complex of Christian duties, both speculative and practical; every principle which first initiates us into, and finally completes a state of grace. So that we must not only believe, but be "careful to maintain good works;" not only upon a sudden fit, from a transient dread change our minds for a little time from a state of vice to a state of virtue, but we must be impressed with that "godly sorrow, which worketh a repentance not to be repented of." We must not only content ourselves with observing some parts of God's laws, and excepting others, as our darling passion or fancy leads us, but we must "obey from the heart that form of godliness which he has delivered us."

Now "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and therefore differs from science more in the nature of the *evidence* than the degree of *certainty*. Every subject carries its own respective proofs along with it; to attempt to illustrate then one kind of science, by the proofs which essentially belong to another, is so far from discovering the light of truth, that

that we only put ourselves in the dark. No wonder that men have "erred concerning "the faith," when they have vainly expected to bring the doctrine of the Trinity down upon a level with mathematical demonstration. Now upon the present subject I argue thus: What I see, I believe upon the evidence of the thing itself; what I believe, I credit upon the testimony of others. *Human* faith then must be fraught with imperfections and carry uncertainty along with it; because a man wanting knowledge may deceive himself and others, without integrity may impose upon their credulity, and being not gifted with prescience must be fallible: But a *divine* faith rests upon the authority of God himself, who being possessed of fore-knowledge, as clearly discovers the train of future events as we behold the objects immediately before us; being omniscient, is well acquainted with the properties and effects of those things he has created; and being omnipotent, can effect whatever he promises, or his goodness thinks expedient to produce. This was exactly Abraham's faith, which was imputed to him for righteousness: Against every kind of hope "he believed in hope:" Though the promise

was saddled with every improbability arising from nature, yet " he staggered not at the " deadness" of his own body, or " of Sarah's " womb," but firmly believed that as God had promised, he would also perform it. The like faith will be ever imputed to us, " if we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who " was delivered for our offences, and raised " again for our justification." But we are to remember, that if we ever hope to be ranked with Abraham in the righteousness of his faith, we must give the same evidence of it by our ready and punctual obedience. Abraham's faith had been merely ideal and nugatory, and he had little deserved the title of " Father of the Faithful," had he not immediately obeyed the command which God gave him of circumcising himself (which at that advanced period of life must have been a painful operation) as well as of perpetuating the practice to all those future generations, which in him were to be chosen and blessed: So also our persuasion of the truth and merits of a crucified Saviour will only prove our condemnation, unless we square our conduct by his example and precepts, celebrate his Sacraments of Baptism and Supper (the only positive

positive instructions which he has established) and delight in a conscience that gladly listens to the soft whispers of the spirit, and strives to be "void of offence towards God and towards man."

The only tests of a divine commission, both among the Jews under the old dispensation, and Christians under the new, were the *spirit of prophecy*, and the *performance of miracles*: In these our Saviour exceeded all that ever went before him. His prophecies respecting the destruction of the Jewish temple and polity, were so pointing, and so literally fulfilled, that we who by history can compare the facts with the predictions, have the advantage of a stronger *kind* of evidence, and consequently under stronger conviction: And the Jews, in his time, having ocular demonstration of those miracles which he constantly and daily wrought, must feel that irresistible impulse which bare history, however well authenticated, can never inspire us with: But they, we, and all, are surrounded by "such a cloud of witnesses," that what our Saviour said to the Jews is justly applicable to us in full force of judgment. "If I

" none other man did, ye had not had sin ;
 " but now ye have no cloak for your sin."
 " This is our condemnation," which ought
 to be our joy, that " light is come into the
 " world ;" but unhappily, instead of " walk-
 " ing as Children of Light," we rather " love
 " darkness." How then can we have peace
 with God when the light of his countenance
 only betrays our guilt? How can we feel
 ourselves justified by faith, when we have no
 confidence towards God ; when we experi-
 ence not the least " Love of God shed abroad
 " in our hearts," and when the Holy Ghost,
 finding the temples of our bodies occupied
 by the foulest spirits, rejects such an habita-
 tion, and leaves us to " a reprobate mind."
 " The peace of God, which passeth all un-
 " derstanding," and which the natural man
 can never taste, can only be purchased
 through the bloody, pierced side of a cruci-
 fied Jesus : All other means must prove abor-
 tive. 'Tis not good works, 'tis not repen-
 tance, 'tis not obedience, 'tis not morality,
 'tis not all these alone, and disunited from a
 proper principle of faith, that can ever ren-
 der us accepted by God. It is the God-Man
 our Saviour that has promised to give his
 holy

holy Spirit to those who with a living sincerity ask it ; 'tis he only who can sprinkle the blood upon the book of the covenant, and so present himself, instead of us, without spot or blemish. And when we reflect, that he not only suffered for us on earth, but now sitteth in Heaven at the right hand of God, to intercede for us, and present our prayers to the Father, how much are we wanting to ourselves if we neglect to adopt those opportunities which Providence has put into our hands, of strengthening our faith by private meditations, by publick hearing, and by every other rational mode of edification ? For the Apostle St. Paul tells us, that even " faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by " the word of God." But how shall they hear without a preacher ?

Sorry am I to reflect, that the doctrine of these days is composed of " wood, hay, " stubble ;" any rubbish, any crude, indigested notions of morality, rather than of that form of sound words which has been handed down by the Saints. The religion of this time is not built upon that corner-stone which will stand the test of any weight, but is cloathed in the filthy rags of personal righteousness,

righteousness, which smell offensive at the altar, and must ever condemn us before God. Christianity and morality, though distinct in themselves, ought ever to be inseparable companions: Christianity first, because "the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world;" and morality as the true fruit and evidence of Christian principles, because "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." We should never so far depend upon morality as to suppose that by virtue of our own strength, unassisted by the grace of our Lord, we can travel to the heavenly Jerusalem; neither are we so implicitly to rest upon the merits of Christ as to neglect our most earnest endeavours after holiness and goodness. No; we must strive to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling;" with fear lest we should not be zealous enough; and with trembling, lest, after all, we should be lost. I have only to add, that if "we prepare our hearts to seek the Lord," earnestly endeavour to be like him, and lean on the bosom of a Saviour, "his grace will be sufficient for us."

Which God grant, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N XVII.

ST. LUKE, CHAP. X. VER. 41, 42.

41. *"Martha! Martha! Thou art careful
"and troubled about many things."*

42. *"But one thing is needful: And Mary
"hath chosen that good part, which shall not
"be taken away from her."*

THE trifling, useless, and wicked pursuits of mankind, abundantly confirm the truth of this position, in all classes and degrees of mankind: Every day's experience, those instances which hourly fall under every one's notice, too fatally convince us, that their time, however wisely apportioned by Providence, is not employed in a manner that

that God designed it. Each darling passion takes the lead, hurries us on to the possession of it's favourite object, and surprises us into unhappy consequences, which our heart, in it's cooler moments, has often disapproved, and as frequently condemned in others. In the heat of giddy pursuit what prostitution do we make of reason, common sense, and the plainest dictates of our understandings? So that, good God! didst thou not sometimes, after the abuse of the riches of thy Providence, temper thy justly deserved severity by giving us those husks which man gives to swine, but refuses to us, and so, like the Prodigal, bring us home to reflection, we should be lost in temporal destruction and eternal horror! If we think at all when we act (which is not always the case) we too often suffer imagination to paint a scene of such pleasures as nature cannot furnish. The bubble breaks, and we find we are attempting to grasp mere air, what we cannot feel only from it's malignant influence. Every object that attracts our sight, every sound which engages our attention, every idea that strikes us, excite new desires, and render us a prey to disquietude: We are soon convinced that misery, instead
of

of happiness, is the consequence of our projects, and that the path we pursue through so many dangers and difficulties, instead of leading to the garden of delights, terminates in the desert of misfortunes: In short, mere trifles, whence we can expect no substantial pleasure or amusement, so distinguish the cast of some men's characters, that did not their shape evince them human, we should be led to question their race, and to place them in a lower order of beings.

But if these vain pursuits afford so little solid satisfaction, surely we may hope that the more useful employments may more amply gratify our search: No; the warrior quits the bowers of ease and retirement, rushes into the fields of slaughter, endures a thousand hardships, and is exposed to a thousand dangers. His bed is often no other than the dusty surface of the earth, his shelter the canopy of Heaven, his food the coarsest in the most scanty portions, and his drink the unwholesome water of some turbid pool. What does he hope to gain from all this? Only a little glory, the empty applause of his fellow-mortals: When, lo! a thousand accidents may deprive him of his ideal object, and
render

render all his hopes abortive. An unfortunate mistake may produce a total defeat, or the malicious tongue of slander blast the laurels on his brow.

The merchant, stimulated by the ambition of acquiring riches, ventures his substance on the pathless ocean, and sends the products of his own to distant countries. He calculates much upon the return of the fleet, and anticipates his own happiness, forgetting the craggy rocks that lie concealed beneath the surface of the deep, the raging tempests that biggen the sea with mountainous horror, or the subtle artifices of a determined foe.

The husbandman again assiduously labours in tilling the ground, exposes himself to the chilly blasts of winter, and the scorching heats of summer, he bends beneath the toils of the field, and bedews the earth with the sweat of his brow. The hopes of a plentiful harvest support him under all his pains, and animate his industry with redoubled vigour. Absorbed in the pleasing expectations of a large increase, he forgets the dangers to which the seed is exposed, and the many accidents that may baffle all his sanguine wishes, and render his enchanting prospects an empty dream.

dream. He never reflects that an army of insects may change his luxuriant fields into a desert, that the blasting winds of the East may nip the bud of his most flattering desires, or that the water-spouts from Heaven may sour the smiles of harvest, and amidst all her pride blacken the face of nature.

The man of learning spends his days in reflection and a continued series of laborious studies. He is desirous of adding one discovery to another, and of penetrating still deeper into sublime disquisitions. He flatters himself that when he has surmounted a difficulty, all others will vanish and place him on the summit of his wishes. But, he soon finds himself disappointed; other difficulties present themselves, and are in their turn surmounted, till experience, after a life spent in continual labour and the most painful efforts of mind, convinces him that his desires are impossible to be gratified, and that every science is unbounded. But what motive animates him to engage in such an inexhaustible series of pain and toil? The hopes of fame. He flatters himself that posterity will mention him with honour, and that the most distant ages will revere his memory.

Filled

Filled with this enchanting idea, he never reflects that succeeding generations will make new discoveries, and carry the sciences to a greater degree of perfection, that his labours will be rendered useless, and perhaps after all his researches suffered to sink in the whirlpools of oblivion.

It may be asked, why were these passions implanted in the human breast? Why is the Lord of the sublunary world prompted to engage in projects he can never perfect, to grasp at objects he may never enjoy, and always to seek happiness that flies from his embrace? Because he is compounded of two principles, the one celestial and immortal, the other terrestrial and subject to the stroke of death. The soul, whilst confined within its earthly prison, is always thirsting after happiness, and therefore always animating its companion to make different attempts in order to attain it: But, whether they succeed or not, she feels herself disappointed; the happiness that results is not the happiness she expected, because it is not adapted to her nature: Celestial joys alone can satisfy her, but these are not to be found in the regions of mortality. Instead therefore of seeking pleasures

pleasures in these low abodes, the desires should be fixed on those beyond the grave: These alone can satisfy the longings of the soul, and these alone are permanent and substantial. So long as these two very different natures are united, so long they must be conversant with objects different from each other, and therefore the Supreme has allotted times and seasons for both. The body must be supported as the tabernacle of the soul, and on account of its continual tendency to sickness and decay, must be supplied with food, raiment, exercise, and other things necessary for its recruit; but, since after all our expence and care it must return to the dust from whence it was taken, therefore it highly becomes us to consider what provision we make for the soul which must return to the God who gave it. We must feed it with "the bread from Heaven," give it "draughts of living water," and cloath it in the "best robe of righteousness:" And this must be done, not to the neglect of our necessary worldly business, but with an attention as much superior to that as the soul is more valuable than the body.

From

From what I have here advanced I would not wish to be understood as discouraging the spirit of industry, or inculcating the necessity of being always upon our knees in prayer. No: Religion comprehends more than this; it includes a duty to God, a duty to our neighbour, and a duty to ourselves, and our immediate relatives. The duty to God can never be well performed, if we be wanting in a proper attention to our neighbours and near kindred: Neither can the duties resulting from our social or domestic capacities in any degree set aside, or be preferred before our attendance upon God. In all our dealings with our neighbour, or actions that more immediately affect ourselves, we should still retain a prevailing sense of the Deity, and regulate our actions respectfully to each, according to the precepts laid down in the Gospel: Of all other things this is the most needful, because God has made it the condition of our well-being here, and glory hereafter; because God, under the pain of the heaviest displeasure, demands such obedience from us, and because he will try us at the last great day by those very laws, and will punish our disobedience.

Then

Then let me ask any, the most worldly-minded of all, whether upon serious reflection there is any thing that ought to stand in competition with this? Let me appeal to the best disposed, whether in the course of their lives they ever found any delight equal to that of serving God, and living under a sense of the atonement? Whether they ever received any profit that could compensate the loss of their souls? And whether, amidst the high applause, and ambitious glory of this bustling world, there can be any honour that equals the privilege of being called after the name of Christ? No; the honour of this world is only a little deceitful varnish that conceals the scabby parts of human nature: It is merely the blazing comet of a little short day, which soon sets in the dark obscurity of a grave. As for our possessions, though we now strive to add house to house, and field to field, and seem to think the world our own, and the fullness thereof, yet we shall carry none of them away with us when we die; they may enhance our guilt, but can never abate our punishment. And as for the delights of this scene, which so much enchant and captivate the human mind, they are

merely a gilded froth, which allures the touch, and vanishes upon the pressure.

Seeing then that all these things will be taken away from us, it becomes common prudence to enquire what is that profit, pleasure, and honour, that will stand the test of the next world, as well as of this? 'Tis the peaceable, milky, benevolent principles of the Gospel, that can alone recommend us to good men while we live here, and to God when we go hence, as being most congenial to his goodness. It is a worthy sense of the redemption by Jesus Christ (that gracious display of the love of God to man) that can alone inspire us with such sentiments as God, who ever honours the Son, will ever approve. This is that passport by the title of which we may be admitted into the heavenly Jerusalem, and without which, I have the authority of the Scriptures to assert, no man can possibly be saved. The most eminent virtue of the highest order ceases to be such, unless it springs out of that stem of Jesse: Unless we drink of that spiritual rock which supplies the well of life with continual streams of living water, we shall ever thirst, ever be
drudging

drudging to draw from the depth of human resources, but never be satisfied.

Let us then this very day, "whilst it is "called to-day," with honest hearts choose that "good part which," though all other things fail us, we are assured by our Saviour can "never be taken away from us." Let us be "careful for nothing, but in every "thing by prayer and supplication with "thanksgiving let our requests be made "known unto God." Let us implore his spirit to come down, and assist us in this arduous, this important work of salvation, that we may be enabled to approach the Father with godly sincerity, with hearts justly affected with a sense of our sins, and with earnest endeavours after that happiness which the blood of Christ only can procure: And may the same spirit so illuminate our understandings, regulate our affections, and sanctify our wills, that under the blessed influence of his assisting and preventing grace, we may be no farther solicitous about this world than is necessary for our comfort here, and bliss hereafter.

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S E R M O N XVIII.

 JOB, CHAP. II. VER. 10.

*“Thou speakest as one of the foolish women
 “ speaketh: What? Shall we receive good
 “ at the hand of God, and shall we not re-
 “ ceive evil?”*

THERE is an over-weaning partiality which diffuses itself through all our actions, and spreads a mist over our understandings: Our judgments are so often perverted by the flattery of self-deceit, that we over-rate our best qualities, and throw a delusive veil over our worst: The evils that we suffer we magnify to the monstrous size of unmerited afflictions, and the blessings we receive, like beasts of prey, we growl over and devour, as the produce of our own prowess and sufficiency; but alas! forgetting

the hand that gave them. Let us each consult our respective situations in life, and ask ourselves whether Providence, in a thousand instances, has not been mindful of us, and blessed us? How many enjoy (not enjoy perhaps) are favoured, however, with an uninterrupted state of prosperity, and the sunshine of whose days not a single cloud has eclipsed; but let us ask, have they fed the hungry, clothed the naked, relieved the fatherless and widow, and so cast some mites into the treasury of Heaven? If they have not done this, that wealth and prosperity are their only portion, a portion in this life, without any the least hope in the next. But can these men say that these things are their due? Can they lay any claim to the bounty of Heaven? Have they laid up such a stock of merit as to justify their complaint upon the want of them? No: I fear that the best of us, if we descend into our hearts, will find too much depravity and corruption, too many defects and miscarriages, too many sins both of commission and omission, to afford us any pretensions to the gifts of Providence. How often have we been awed by the frowns, and courted the smiles of men, in matters where
 God,

God, and God only, should have been in all our thoughts? How often have we abstained from those actions in the sight of men, which, without a blush, we have dared to commit in the sight of God? How often have we prostituted his holy name to purposes of the basest nature, to give sanction to those evils which the laws of God and Man should have restrained? How often have we made his Sabbath a day of pastime, amusement, and diversion; deserted our God to visit a friend; or suffered indolence and indifference itself to take the place of piety and devotion? How many assemble with their brethren in the church with the most bitter rancour and malevolence in their hearts; who cannot repeat the Lord's Prayer without damning themselves out of their own mouths, and curse those whom they are commanded to pray for? How many attend there merely because custom dictates, for the purpose of offering up a little lip-service, without the least emotion of the heart; or else to acquire reputation to themselves by exhibiting, as they *call* it, an example to others? How many wretches upon their bended knees indulge the vagaries of the fond reverie, only to murder the dull, tedious

tedious time ; purposely fet their thoughts adrift into the wild fields of vision and fancy, or else with fashionable levity give loose to profane mirth and ridicule ? Again : How many in the high-boasted cause of gallantry and honour imbrue their hands in the blood of innocence, and make the husband a cuckold, children fatherless, and the wife a widow ? How many likewise impose upon the ignorance, the credulity, nay, the confidence of others, and then boast of their integrity in fulfilling a bargain which the sword of justice ought to rescind ? How many with the breath of slander poison the reputation of all around them ; with artful insinuations stab their reputation in the dark ; with half-opened mouth, with unmanly hints involve the fairest name in the foulest suspicions ? But, to soften this harsh picture, and bode better things than these, how often do the temptations of the world, aided by the Devil's delusions, betray us all into sin, and tumble us headlong down a precipice, before we were sensible of the danger of the approach ? How often, because every wish has not been crowned with the wreath of plenty, have we murmured against the good man of the house, called the justice
of

of his dispensations in question, and so challenged the Almighty to withdraw those mercies which we knew not how to value?

No wonder then that the face of Providence becomes so chequered ; happy it is that it is not wholly darkened : After such glaring misconduct, each case of which is discoverable by some traits in one individual or other, shall we have the assurance to expect good, when evil is so much our due. When our affections have been invariably rivetted to this life and its appendages, and we have totally estranged our hearts from the supreme good, is it not natural to suppose that God will withdraw these things from us, and so awaken us by his judgments? When the holy name of God is made the cant-term of a bustle, or the wanton expletive of vain discourse, is it to be wondered at if that same name be fixed to a warrant from Heaven to arrest our thoughtless career by adversity? When the Church is made the sanctuary of foolish conceit and profane mirth ; when the smallest incident shall so easily unstring our attention ; when an indulged levity of sentiment shall unhinge our devotion, and open a door to a whole train of vagrant desires ;
what

what can we expect but that God should brandish "the furiousness of his wrath, anger, " displeasure, and trouble, and send evil " angels among them?" Happy is it for us that his mercies are so great! Happy is it for us that " we fall into the hands of God, and " not into the hands of Man;" Man, that unrelenting monster, who too often delights to prey upon the sufferings of his fellow-creatures, with ruffian violence would, if he could, " consume us in a moment." But our Heavenly Father is God and not Man: He is not only our Creator but our Preserver; not only our Lord but our tender Father; not only our Judge but our Redeemer; not only a " swift witness against us," but our advocate and intercessor. We therefore do great injustice to his paternal tenderness when we call those events *evils* which in the course of his kind chastisement must tend to our greatest good. He means not " to grieve, " but as his beloved sons to warn us," by gentle corrections to reduce us from the error of our ways, and by thwarting our darling passion, which we are too apt to call our forest evil, to bring us home to himself. " Happy is the man whom he thus correcteth,"
and

and most miserable of all men is he who is suffered without check or controul to run riot in the ways of vice and folly. "To be given up to a reprobate mind" is a mark which Scripture has fixed upon the worst state of Man: And I cannot figure to myself a more deplorable creature than him who is driven before the wind and tide of appetite, without the least comfort of God's presence, or the smallest whisper of the Holy Spirit to solace and speak peace to his deluded soul.

It must not be dissembled indeed, that a state of virtue is in many respects a state of great uneasiness, and that it is "through much tribulation that we can" at any rate "enter into the kingdom of God." The good man has so many temptations of the world, so many bewitching enchantments of the flesh, so many subtle delusions of the Devil constantly besetting him, that he is obliged to be always in a posture of defence, and to "put on the whole armour of God." The Devil in particular, and his agents amongst ourselves, make him the singular mark at which they level all their artillery, so that no device is left untried to supplant his integrity, and trepan him into sin. God himself indeed, as
was

was the case of Job, suffers him to be touched and buffeted by Satan, as well to humiliate his opinion of himself, which might otherwise swell out into spiritual pride, as to exhibit an example to others of patience and undissembled goodness. As for the ungodly, those that are so far abandoned as to have overwhelmed all sense of shame and guilt, "it is not so with them:" The Devil annoys them not, because they are his servants; temptations affright them not, because they seek them; bad men distrust them not, because they are their chosen companions; and God afflicts them not, because he has for the present cast them away. "They come in no misfortune like other folk, neither are they plagued like other men;" yet finally "they consume, perish, and come to a fearful end."

But supposing all the worst of evils come upon us, evils of the largest size, that we eat the bread of affliction, drink the water of affliction, and are tried in the furnace of adversity, yet a "living man must not complain for the punishment of his sins." So long as a man professes his existence, though, like the wounded snake, he drags it heavily and painfully

painfully along, he must not remonstrate with Providence: Because, who knows but that very existence, however uncomfortable, may be spun out to the length of an atonement for former offences, and be crowned with peace at the last? "The same hand which maketh sore, bindeth up:" The same God, who at one view surveys the whole circuit of moral as well as natural life, gently tempers his dispensations to the habit of the soul; willing that lenient medicines should effect that recovery which harsher applications might hazard and endanger; willing rather to draw us to himself by the filken cord of love, than to rule us into subjection by the heavy rod of iron: In short, all the ways of his Providence, however intricate they appear, certainly apply themselves to us as rational creatures; they address either the intelligent faculties of the mind, or the moral affections of the heart. If the blessings wherewith he every day, every hour surrounds us, work so sufficiently upon our gratitude as to teach us to obey, because we love the hand that confers them, Providence has then reached its gracious, its benign end; but if the animal part so far blunt
the

the sensibility of the soul as to render us brutally inclined to sense and appetite, in defiance of the laws and will of Heaven, it then becomes his honour and justice as the Governor of the World, and his benignity as our Parent, to check the impetuosity of our passions, by removing the fuel that administers to their flame. Thus God often makes our crime our punishment: By the abuse of the goods we enjoy we often bring evils upon us. We all know that by the prodigal consumption of wealth we incur poverty; by the intemperate use of health we pine with sickness; and by the prostitution of most blessings we involve ourselves naturally in miseries: So that did not the hand of Heaven actually lay the burden of our sins upon us, we should in many cases prove our tormentors and too fatally wound our peace. "Curse not God" then, but blame yourselves: Be assured that "the Lord is with you, whilst ye be with him; if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you."

SERMON

S E R M O N XIX.

 PSALM CXLVI. VER. 3.

*“ For when the breath of man goeth forth, he
 “ shall turn again to his earth, and then all
 “ his thoughts perish.”*

THIS is a lesson which daily occurrences teach all mankind: No one doubts the truth of this proposition, though very few apply it to themselves in that serious light in which it ought to be held. Every one is too apt to date this awful, this alarming moment, as far as possible from the present period, and because they are now healthy and strong, vainly to imagine that death is left far behind. But oh! foolish, inconsiderate man, learn to think that every moment may be thy last, that it is a guest that is never welcome to the
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most upright heart, and that the first peep into eternity will present us all with horrors that will stagger the philosopher, confound the libertine, and make the free-thinker tremble. How violent must that event be which can dissolve the union of the soul and body, that can separate those substances which the Omnipotence of Heaven alone could unite! How bitter must that event be which could induce even our Saviour to pray against it and beg a deliverance! If he, who never transgressed his father's commands, who had no offended majesty to appease, and nothing to fear after his passion, could so earnestly pray for the "cup to pass from him," how serious and attentive ought we to be in our meditations on that very important, dismal hour, which may prove the beginning of the severest sorrows? How dearly ought we to prize that breath which supports the texture of our frames, and without which our bodies lie down like the carcases of brutes, and are trampled over by the meanest of men? But alas! too often is that breath most shamefully abused, and applied to purposes of the most enormous nature: Too often it is converted into the flames of hell, kindled by the profane oaths that

that proceed out of the mouths of men ; and too often do vain, unthinking wretches, without any regard to God or religion, wish themselves dead, and curse that Being which they cannot too much value and esteem. Should God indulge them in their wishes, and give them only a day's warning of their approaching fate, they would then heartily desire to recall their words, to recant their simple accents, and to know that the sting of death is too piercing for all our philosophy to render pleasant and agreeable.

The King, who this day sits on his throne, surrounded with pomp, feasted by luxuries, and attended by the richest nobles, may tomorrow be forced to quit this splendor, and be laid upon a level with the most inferior subject. The nobleman, who with erected front looks down with contempt on his fellow-creatures, who builds, pulls down, and rebuilds, who levels mountains and fills up valleys, who plans to himself eternal schemes of happiness, and riots in glory, shall in a few hours, unexpectedly and unprepared perhaps, receive a message for his soul, and with reluctance drop his greatness into the obscurity of a grave. Let any man cast his eyes

upon a dying person, and there survey the change which ensues upon the discharge of his last breath: He who all his life-time used to wear a florid countenance, was remarkable for his great activity, and lively to a Proverb, has now lost that vivid hue, lies with every joint stiff and fettered, and every imagination of his heart arrested in its gay career. O fellow mortal, fix thy thoughts upon a prostrate corpse, and ask thyself some such questions as these: Have I not seen him walking? Have I not heard him talking? Have I not enjoyed the sweets of his company and conversation? Have I not transacted business with him? Have I not attended to his future plans and schemes, and envied his happiness? Ah! there he lies, a lifeless trunk, without sense or motion; his feet confined to the space of a few inches; his tongue dried up to the roof of his mouth; his mind, which was once the seat of delight, now senseless and forgetting all; his acres contracted to six feet of earth, and all his projects vanished into air, and deriding their author. Nay, step a little farther and view him beyond the grave: What is his dear soul now employed about? What? Enjoying part of the reward, or suffering

fering part of the punishment of his life spent here; either singing Hallelujahs with other Saints in the presence of the Heavenly Choir, or else cursing his former folly, and lamenting the horrid completion of his once-kind and merciful Saviour. Shed a few tears then to the memory of thy friend, and learn to know that his fate must in time be thine.

What wretched, frail, and impotent creatures we are! Introduced into the world at first in a most surprising manner, and as miraculously called away! This hour busy on the transitory stage of life, the next breathless and no more than a lump of clay: This minute gay and careless of the event of futurity, the next only the food for worms: This moment powerful, important, and big in the midst of our weakness, the next a carcase, hideous to behold, and detestable to our dearest friends. Learn hence to value the blessing of life, and to shudder at the horrors of death: But alas! this reflection too seldom occurs to the generality of mankind. The self-admiring lady, habited for conquest in the trappings of the splendid evening, delicately trips along the floor, imagining the bloom of her charms can never be expunged,

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that her white and red cannot fail her fame, and that with these the pallid face of death can make no devastation; but look at her the next week in her coffin, and you see her cheeks wan and pale, her lips cold and cloying, and her eyes, which were once taught to roll destructive, now sunk in their sockets, and closed never more to wound. The opulent merchant again, who magnificently struts upon the Exchange, appears with more than common dignity, and is gazed at for the multitude of his riches, whilst he calculates the interest of the lying hour even to a fraction, can yet never divine how long his sunshine may last, or how soon his great lustre may be eclipsed. Let no man therefore pique himself upon his riches, his power, his dignity, his emoluments, or any of his worldly attainments, but let him reflect that these are tenable only by the strength of a little thin air, breathed into his nostrils at his birth, and withdrawn at his death.

The meanness of our original, and the precariousness of our being, if we give them their full scope, are reflections sufficient to clip the wings of ambition, to chill the warmth of every adventurous pursuit, and to lay

lay us low in our own insufficiency and demerit: But the misfortune is, we do not think that we are to die, we are perpetually making provision as if we were to live for ever, as if the world was our own and the fulness thereof, and as if the thread of our existence was betwixt our own fingers, to be spun out to the length of our own folly and caprice. But, the grave perpetually opens its jaws for thy reception, thou thoughtless wretch! and a few, very few years, shall mingle thy now pampered flesh with the mould, without any distinction of it's being thine, or more than common earth. Ask thy heart the truth of these things, and it will sicken at thy folly, and vomit out all thy pride. Though thou now settest thyself above the common level of man, yet then thou shalt be levelled as low as the very dirt, and reckoned only as the mire in the streets. Where are then thy visionary thoughts, thy profits, thy honours, thy riches, thy power, thy greatness, thy schemes? All sunk into a mere nothing, and perishing in their very birth. Look into thyself, read the Scriptures, thence fear for thy own fate; in short, remember the end, and thou wilt never do amiss. Begin the day with

prayer lest thou shouldst never see the evening, and finish thy waking hours with devotion, lest the morning should prove faithless to thy sight, and thy former busy, perhaps wicked thoughts, be lulled into a senseless sleep, to be awakened only by a poignant sense of unrepented guilt. We know not what a day may bring forth: Every hour is winged with fate, and to some one or other brings the appalling message. Oh Death! thou monster of the severest, most piercing tortures, blunt the arrow which thou projectest against me, and let my heart fall quietly asleep: Spare the pangs which too often arise from thy visage, and when thou visitest my bed, make it a bed of peace! The head that is now pregnant with schemes of the deepest state-policy, may before to-morrow's sun be laid senseless upon its pillow. The tongue, which this day harangues the senate, with the most nervous language and most manly sentiment fixes the attention and excites astonishment, may soon lose its motion and become silent and dumb.

Learn then to reflect more frequently upon that awful moment, when you must leave your darling hopes, your friends, your favourites,

favourites, this world and all its follies behind you ; when every thing will appear vain and empty, and those things which before we trusted in, shall be rendered useleſs to our being, and not a moment prolong our ſtay on this ſide the grave. There is no help in theſe things, they may flatter, but they will certainly deceive us. Our only confidence is in a God and Saviour ; let us make that God our friend, and cordially embrace the benefits of that Saviour. Look up, my friends, to the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the ciftern whence you may draw whole draughts of living water, whence the ſoul may be reſreſhed with every comfort it pants after, and whence in a dying hour can proceed the moſt laſting ſatiſfaction, the moſt ſolid delight. Every thing beſides is only froth, which eludes your graſp and deceives your taſte, great ſhew but little ſubſtance, tending to feed your imagination, but not to ſatiſfy the empty ſoul with goodneſs. Amidſt the changes and chances of this mortal life it is our great buſineſs to ſeek thoſe things which make for our peace ; thoſe which the world afford are too defective in their nature to anſwer this important end. When death draws
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the deceitful curtain and banishes from them their imposing colours and fallacious lights, we shall find that there is but a small portion of our time in which we may truly be said to have lived. Life is considered by too many only as the enjoyment of worldly goods, but their death will convince them, that they then only begin to *live*, when they begin to *die*. So *live* then that ye may never *die*, and so *die* that ye may ever *live*.

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SERMON

S E R M O N XX.



I ST. PETER, CHAP. III. VER. 8.

*" Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one
 " of another; love as brethren, be pitiful,
 " be courteous."*

IF we consider a little the method of God's dealing with mankind, in creating them at first, in sustaining them with his power, in protecting them with his Providence, in redeeming them from eternal ruin by the costly price of his own son's blood, and, as the proposed effect of all this, in sanctifying them with his grace, we cannot but observe a continued series of divine mercy and compassion through every age of the world, and through every moment of each man's life. The law of Christ in every page prescribes us this duty of benevolence; his every parable instructs

instructs us in the nature and practice of some humane, social virtue; the whole period of his incarnation was filled up in “doing good, “in healing every sickness and every disease;” and he is now become a “merciful High Priest that cannot but be touched with a “feeling of our infirmities.”

Now all true religion consists in a studious imitation of the *Three in One*: And for the same reason that God himself continually delights in acts of mercy, and takes a peculiar pleasure in that particular attribute, for the same reason it must necessarily be his will that we should put on, as “the elect of God, “bowels of mercy,” and that we should be “of the same mind one towards another:” In conformity then to this evangelical principle, and from a conviction of its utility and practicability, the Apostle St. Peter inculcates this lesson of my text. If we look into the world, and survey the different schisms in the church, and the various fictions in the state, what strivings and contrivings there are in every class and description of mankind, what sharp animosities and resentments are pursued with the most violent heat of persecution, we may much wonder how this rule can at
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all apply to practice. But then we are at the same time to reflect, that these are the seeds of degeneracy, the fruits of a fallen, depraved nature, and not the offspring of that Gospel, which most peculiarly disseminates "Peace on earth and good will towards men." Our Saviour visited this vale of sorrows on purpose to destroy these works of the devil, to suppress the workings of that acrimonious turgid bile which generates so much contention, and by the soft lubricating medicine of his grace to "sweeten us into kindness," and so "make our very enemies to be at peace with us." There is something so winningly mild and benevolent in the whole system of Christianity, that did we but properly attend to it, we should find that the same spirit, which first indited these truths, would likewise whisper into our minds the soft fostering gales of humility and concord. For it is pride, that bane of mortals, from the fall to this very hour, that progeny of the devil who first exhibited it in Heaven, that still sets itself up against the kingdom of Christ. It is his province and continued study to defeat as much as possible the glorious end of the Redemption, and, by secretly inspiring mankind with
 hatred,

hatred, variance, envy, revenge, and such like black and dirty passions, to render the soul an habitation unfit for the spirit. There is an incessant reasoning in the natural man, "which shall be the greatest." This principle, like a little leaven, inflates the whole lump, swells it beyond that sphere in which it is ordained by Providence to move, by breaking in upon other orders produces strife and envying, and where those are "there is confusion and very evil work."

Now there is such a comfort resulting from a complacency and serenity of mind, from that calmness and composure of spirit, which so eminently distinguish a state of grace, that one would think we should cultivate it for the sake of itself. Half the pains that we take to torment ourselves and others, would, upon Gospel principles, ensure us peace at home and respect abroad. "But it is impossible," you will say, "to think alike." I grant you that our opinions are formed from the evidences of things as they strike us, and that from the intervention of passion or prejudice, or through some defect in the understanding, we often view them in different lights: But still, though we differ in opinion,

opinion, yet we may restrain the violence of passion, and suppress that rancour which too often arises from the most trifling conversations. Those who have had the opportunities of a liberal and handsome education ought to bear the infirmities of those who have not been so providentially blessed, and so "have compassion one of another:" Those, on the contrary, who cannot but be sensible that they must be extremely deficient in the power of forming a right judgment in all things, ought "in honour to prefer one another:" Hence arises the necessity, as well as policy of the most expanded benevolence in matters of Faith: Though with respect to some points of mere human order or formality, we may dissent from each other, yet if in the most essential points of religion we concur in sentiment, charity enjoins us to "bear such in the spirit of meekness;" and St. Paul advises us to "receive him that is weak in Faith, but not to doubtful disputations." Why then dost thou judge thy brother? And why dost thou set at nought thy brother? The womb of nature is common to us all, and we come into the world without any distinctive privileges: The rich
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and the poor experience the same mode of birth, and after sojourning here our stated period, we alike descend into the grave, and our place, whether palace or cottage, knows us no more: Whilst we are here we breathe, we eat, we drink, and perform other natural offices, in the same unvaried manner: And when we are called hence, we shall all "appear before the same judgment seat of "Christ," where all difference of opinion will be brought to the truest test. What constitutes the difference then? A little fastidious pomp, a little *more* luxurious diet, which often sends us sooner out of the world, and a great deal *less* virtue, which ought most to discriminate.

But we are created social beings, and during our journey through life must have frequent concerns and connections with each other. The mutual offices of society call so often upon our friendship, counsel, aid, and assistance, that was there not some principle to humanize the brute, and reduce his savage ferocity, the duties of life would lie neglected, and rapine, violence, and oppression, would cry "Havock, and let loose the dogs "of war." The reciprocal rights and obligations

gations that subsist amongst us all, through every link, from the top to the bottom of the chain, render us dependent upon each other, and naturally plant in our breasts a principle of policy at least, if not of gratitude : Would it were gratitude ! The natural sense of that self-preservation which kindles within us, essentially directs us to pursue those means which tend most to that end : Experience informs us, that quarrels, divisions, and animosities, too often endanger it ; whilst peace, amity, and concord, procure that happiness, which, springing only from virtue, has its seat only in the heart. How often, in the course of things, do we receive favours from a quarter the least suspected ? How often are we forced to stoop to benefits from those whom we hate ? And how often has the poorest, most contemptible wretch been made the instrument of a great man's happiness ? In elections, for instance, the candidate appears in masquerade what he ever should be : His courteous manner, and humble deportment at that time, betray his conviction, and the necessity of those virtues, which at others he claims no kindred to. We none of us know what a day will bring forth, or how

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we shall stand in need of each other's friendly arm to support the tottering frame: Of how much consequence is it then, by our constant friendly deportment, to have a claim upon the benevolence of the world? And how soothing in affliction to see our brother's hand voluntarily put forth to sustain us? It is here only that the soul feels itself in some measure unburthened of it's load of clay, when we so nearly assimilate to the God of that love, which in so many ways, by so many measures, night and day, every hour, is poured-down upon us.

But our union is more indispensable when we reflect, that it is the same God that has created us, and the same Christ that has redeemed us all. No man by his riches, power, or splendour, can bribe the atonement, or secure to himself a larger portion of the Divine favour. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for their's is the kingdom of God:" They shall inherit more of that kingdom whilst they are here militant, as well as shine forth amongst the brightest of the Lord's jewels, when triumphant in Heaven. Besides, we are all so fettered and bound with the heavy chain of our sins, that we have no reason to
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boast one against another, but each to conciliate his brother's good will and kindness. Some indeed attempt to alleviate it's weight by mounting upon the frothy surface of an airy, dissolute bustle; or gliding down the smooth stream of heedless, giddy pursuit; yet we must all stop at one place; one general audit awaits us all. However necessary then the distinction of order may be in this life, as it certainly is, yet there the rich and poor stand upon the same level, and the servant shall be equal to his master. It is awful to reflect how we shall acquit ourselves on that great, that terrible day of the Lord, how to account for that abuse of power, which is now vested in us; when the slave shall be bold enough to challenge the barbarity of the West India tyrants, when the servant shall be encouraged to retort upon his master those oaths, curses, and reproaches, which have been here repeatedly heaped upon him, and when the poor man, who now shrinks under the frowns of his fellow-creature and brother, glittering, tis true, in more gaudy vestments, and loaded with thicker clay, shall then dare with confidence to assert, "I was
 "hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty,
 "and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye
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“ clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and
 “ ye visited me not:” Then shall our Saviour
 stand up to judge their quarrel, to avenge
 their cause, saying, in as much as ye did it
 “ not unto one of the least of these, ye did
 “ it not to me.” How then, in that dreary
 hour, can we look up for that pity, which
 we denied to others? How, good God, can
 we intreat thee to forgive us our trespasses,
 when we have not only not forgiven, but
 with the keenest resentment avenged the
 trespasses of others? How in that trying scene
 can we approach the countenance of our Re-
 deemer, and account for that ingratitude,
 which stamps the modern face of Christianity?
 And how shall we reconcile our malevolent
 deportment to that prayer, which our Sa-
 viour at his execution offered up for his very
 murderers, “ Father, forgive them, they
 “ know not what they do.”

But, alas! the forgiveness of injuries seems
 so little understood in these refined, these an-
 tichristian days, that a want of resentment
 is termed insensibility, and a mark of a grove-
 ling, pusillanimous spirit: Hence duelling re-
 ceives it's sanction, and those, who from
 their situation in life ought to excel in vir-
 tue, become the patrons and abettors of mur-
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der. The man, who has once learnt the art of conquering the fierce emotions of resentful nature, not only displays a sense of injury, but a refinement of soul which sets him above the common brutal sensation, and even above his enemies themselves. "It must needs be that offences come;" and if a man will give loose to the impetuosity of his temper upon every trifling occasion, no wonder if his mind be in continual agitation, and so become a tyrant to itself. The tender passions alone lead to peace; they and they only are the inmates of heavenly nature; those will introduce and welcome you into the company of just men, made perfect by these very means. Avoid then seeking handles of offence; seize every opportunity of shewing civility to all, which will make us polite without moving in the circle of court. Let the spirit of accommodation shew itself in every kind and attentive act of the courtier, but, with this difference, "Let love be without dissimulation." The want of sincerity is the bane of all social and religious duties: It is knavery towards man, and the rankest hypocrisy towards God! But if a man can accustom himself to be insincere to his God, if he can break through all those strong ob-

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ligations and arguments in favour of the one, he will not hesitate to abuse, deceive, and betray the other. So on the contrary, "if a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar," for "he who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen," with whom he lives in habits of daily converse, who is constantly presented to his senses to raise his esteem and excite his compassion, how "can he love God, whom he hath not seen." But he, who loveth God, must love his brother also; that is, every one, whatever his opinions or mode of worship be, purely because he is the child and bears the image of God. Bigotry is properly the want of this pure and universal love: Take heed, therefore, and beware of prejudices, particularly those formed at first interview: They will cast a mist over the understanding, corrupt the judgment, and preclude conviction: By prejudging we shall never be able to judge at all, and so establish a false opinion of our brother, an opinion that will always impress us with unfavourable sentiments of him, and so conspire against that benevolence which it is our duty to entertain, and on all occasions to exhibit. Go therefore, reader, and do thou likewise.